

The Resurrection Life Study Bible™

--A revolutionary look at the New Testament

Dedication

**To Roger Whitlow--Decade after decade, and
generation after generation, a faithful shepherd of
the sheep.**

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

--Matthew 25:29

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INTRODUCTION

You've never seen a Bible like this.

I say that because this New Testament breaks all the rules, and it breaks them for the same reason that the alabaster vial in the Gospels had to be broken: to get to the precious ointment within.

Over the centuries, many fine Bibles have emerged with the goal of getting the Scriptures out of the church pulpit and into the hands of the average man, yet one problem always remained: While the chief message of the New Testament--**"Repent ye, and believe the Gospel"**--was simple enough that anyone could understand it, many things beyond that message remained clouded by text that was either written in a language centuries removed from the readers, or else was too difficult for normal people to understand without someone to explain it to them. (The Ethiopian "**eunuch**" of Acts 8 is a good example.)

When modern paraphrases came along, they did a good job in simplifying the text of Scripture in a way that much more of the Bible became comprehensible to normal people. Even so, because the paraphrases--with good reason--adhered to the actual Scripture text, many people still had the same problem as the Ethiopian in Acts 8: They understood the words, but not necessarily the *meaning* of the words or their full implications. This is because the Bible, and in particular Paul's writings, are difficult to understand without a guide who is able to explain what they meant in the time they were written.

An example of what I mean can be found in the song *Yankee Doodle*, which we all know from our Elementary school days. The fact is, even if you know every word of the song in every language it's ever been translated in, if you do not read other written works apart from the song that explain the culture and context of the time it was written in, you will never understand--no matter how sincere you are, and no matter how many times you read the lyrics--that the words, "*Stuck a feather in his cap, and called it 'Macaroni,'*" are neither nonsensical words, nor do they refer to pasta, but are sarcastically equating Americans with British dandies, who tried to appear cultured by mimicking European culture and fashion!

We have the same problem in translating and understanding the Scriptures. Without knowing the culture behind the writings that the Bible does not convey because the original readers already knew it, we can never understand what much of the New Testament means, because words that mean one thing to us may have meant something totally different to the original writers living in Judea or other parts of the Roman Empire!

And so, each week from behind the pulpit or in commentaries that most of you won't buy, theologians who've spent years learning about the Bible try to teach you the things about it that you really can't know on your own through normal devotions.

While both are necessary and edifying, getting your education through Sunday morning preaching or from a dry theological treatise will never make an imprint upon your mind and spirit the way that simply reading the Scriptures *with understanding* will.

Even if a good paraphrase renders a hard verse into modern language, many verses exist whose full meanings can't properly be clarified merely by paraphrasing them--especially, again, in the case of Paul, who sometimes condenses a paragraph of teaching into only one sentence.

This is where the study Bible in your hands comes in. It will address that problem by coupling a true Bible--the King James Bible--with an amplified paraphrase to help you get the full impact of the Scriptures in a natural, free-flowing manner, rather than through tidbits of information in commentary notes that are typically ignored anyway. [When it does this, the expanded text will often be bracketed as this text is.] Note that the author has attempted, where possible, to write the [bracketed] information in such a way that a reader may ignore it and read past it to have a paraphrase that sticks a bit more closely to the actual biblical text without going beyond it.

Also, because there are many passages where Christ and the Father are both being spoken of but referred to as "**He**," the personal pronoun in the paraphrase text will only be capitalized when it is referring to God the Father or the Holy Spirit in order to avoid confusion.

As noted, this work goes beyond simply paraphrasing verses by expanding and building upon the biblical text. My purpose in doing this is to convey four things:

1. What is on the writer's mind, and what perspective he is coming from, as he writes.
2. What message the writer means to convey to his readers.
3. What his text implies, even if it does not come out and say it.
4. What the text says.

That's right--what it actually *says* is at the bottom of the list, even though it is the most important. This is because the end result of the writer's thinking and inspiration (the 4th factor) is what he writes, but the three prior factors are what *result* in the 4th factor. Thus, it's these three factors beforehand that need to be amplified to get the full grasp of the 4th factor that comes out of them, and this is where a translation--however good it is--will always fall short in some places.

There are many Bibles, including the King James, that will tell you what the Scriptures *say*. But knowing what they say is far less important than knowing what they *mean*. A great example is in 2 Corinthians 12:16. **But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.**

This is a perfect example of a verse that does not say what it means, nor mean what it says. (It is Paul's being sarcastic.)

The paraphrase also incorporates some historical and cultural background information behind the text, along with noting the implications of what various passages mean when factored against other verses that may modify them. While all this may be controversial, it is done in order to be as comprehensive as possible without losing sight of the actual Scripture text as the foundation upon which the paraphrase builds.

Now while the author explains--and prefers explaining--the text in the commentary notes at the bottom of each chapter, readers shy away from commentary notes. In fact, Bible teachers are lucky to get people to pick up a Bible to start with! A lot of information is therefore placed in the paraphrase itself because this is the best way to help a reader who may be unwilling to study commentaries actually learn what it means.

Do not make the presumption that the paraphrase is claiming to be true Scripture!

This is a teaching aid, not a translation! The true Scripture is on the left-hand side of the page. The right-hand side is only a paraphrase to help you understand what the left side of the page means. It may look like regular Scripture in form because it's laid out in chapter and verse, but never treat it as the equal of a translation. The King James is therefore side-by-side with the paraphrase, allowing the reader to compare the paraphrase against the actual Scripture as food for thought. He may then agree or disagree as seems best to him.

However, not everything can be addressed by simply expanding the text, and so I ask you to take the time to read through the following pages since there is some important information to help you understand what follows.

If you won't read anything else, you should examine *What you never knew about the Pharisees*. This article is absolutely critical to understanding the New Testament! Even if you have every word of the New Testament memorized, if you do not know who Shammai and his followers were, what they believed, and the attitudes they had, you will never see more than one side of a two-sided coin so far as the New Testament is concerned, nor will you ever understand the background of what was going on around Jesus and Paul. (You'll also be confused by the references to "Shammaiites" in the Gospel paraphrases.)

But first, when reading a work that seeks to teach from the Bible, you should always have a clear understanding of the author's background and core religious beliefs. To put mine in a nutshell, I was born in the 1950s and was raised a Roman Catholic. In the late 1960s, I became swept up in the occult wave that grew out of the era, and became a Spiritualist medium. Although in spiritual deception, God made great use of that time, for through these practices I came to understand the reality of the supernatural, and so in future years I was unaffected by intellectual or philosophical arguments questioning the existence of God or the devil. Ultimately, it was because the Catholic Church taught me to believe the Bible above all else, that when an educated Christian showed me that the practices I was involved in were opposed by the Bible, I rejected Spiritualism to follow Christ. In the 1990s, I became involved with Messianic Judaism, eventually leaving that movement when its teachings failed the test of Scripture.

Today I am an evangelical Christian who affirms that salvation and forgiveness of sin come by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone as the atonement for our sins (Eph. 2:8). After that, I believe one keeps his salvation in the same manner: By grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone (1st Peter 1:5). I do believe it is possible to lose one's salvation by making a conscious choice to abandon Christ, or by ceasing to hold faith in Christ through becoming **"hardened by the deceitfulness of sin"** (Heb. 3:12-13).

I hold to the core doctrines of Christianity: The virgin birth, Trinity, inerrancy of Scripture, water Baptism, etc. While I am not personally a Charismatic, I believe that the New Testament teaches that so-called "Gifts of the Spirit" are for all generations of believers until the full rule of Christ in the Messianic Age comes.

What else makes this Bible different from many others?

A major difference between this and other study Bibles lies in the fact that this work is written in a way to help the reader comprehend the *Jewish* background from which the New Testament sprang—but without drifting into the heresy of some modern Messianic Jewish commentators who pervert the faith by teaching that keeping the Law of Moses is a part of the Christian experience that we Gentiles have (supposedly) been deceived into abandoning!

Despite this false teaching on the part of some Messianics, it is critically important to understand the New Testament from a Jewish perspective, for every writer of the New Testament, including (probably) Luke, was a 1st century Jew who wrote in a manner consistent with their Jewish backgrounds. Because of this, Gentile readers and Bible commentators are often unaware of many fascinating things in the Scriptures because the culture that gave birth to them is so foreign to those from a Western culture.

The background of Pentecost is a great example. We've all read of how the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples, and tongues of fire appeared over their heads as they spoke in foreign languages. People usually conclude this was a unique, first-time occurrence, but few know that what we call Pentecost was the Jewish Festival of *Shavuot* which, although the culmination of an agricultural Festival, also commemorated the giving of the Law at Sinai.

Jewish legend held that at the time the Law was given on Mount Sinai, God's voice issued forth in all known languages, and visibly formed as tongues of fire upon the heads of those present! Each was then asked personally if he would abide by the terms of the Law. The Jews would have seen the events of Acts 2 as a direct parallel with the most important event of Jewish history, and some would have understood it to mean that the Kingdom of God had come to earth, and that the Law was now being written in the hearts of the people as the Old Testament foretold.

This is just one small example of the many wonderful facts we often miss by our lack of understanding the Jewish culture and background of the New Testament.

The commentary is also not written with any intentional denominational bias other than the foundation of the evangelical understanding of salvation's being by faith alone. While the author has attempted to allow the text to impart its doctrine outside of any pre-conceived notions based on a specific denominational belief, all key doctrinal positions in this work will be made by sifting the biblical text through the filter of understanding that salvation comes through faith alone. Beyond that, here and there will be points that may seem Protestant or Catholic, or Charismatic or non-Charismatic in their presentation for one simple reason: The author believes the Scriptures should be taken as they stand, and no denomination has a monopoly on truth, including his own.

Last of all, this Bible places the Epistles in their correct chronological order, starting with Galatians instead of Romans, which was written years later.

Is our Bible inerrant?

Unfortunately, there is a lot of misunderstanding on what "inerrancy" means with respect to the Scriptures. First and foremost, when we say that the Bible is inerrant, we mean that the first-generation manuscripts penned by the original authors were inerrant. Copies that date anywhere from 200 to 2000 years later are not regarded as inerrant to the same degree, but from available manuscripts we can reconstruct what the original source documents said with a 99% degree of certainty. Where we err from that point is in translating the words into our own language without somehow altering or misunderstanding the original message of the writer.

"Inerrant" also doesn't mean that every word in the document is true in an overly literal sense. For instance, John writes at the end of his Gospel: **And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.** Obviously, this is not literally true. Even if Jesus had done a billion miracles in His life, there would be enough room in all the earth to hold the books detailing those miracles. What John is doing is using *hyperbole*, which isn't always noted by we readers. *Hyperbole* is an exaggerated, intentionally distorted statement of fact to express an important point.

In another instance, Paul writes that he was '**Chief among sinners.**' Now is this literally true? Does it mean that Nero sinned less than Paul, or that Caiaphas was a more righteous man? Of course not! Paul is using hyperbole and making an intentionally exaggerated statement to express a more important point. There is nothing wrong with this, and the usage doesn't mean that the Bible is in error, because the legitimate use of hyperbole exempts the text from being held to a microscopic standard of accuracy.

Also, keep in mind that writing under the *inspiration* of the Holy Spirit isn't necessarily writing under the *dictation* of the Holy Spirit! For instance, if God tells a prophet: "Write these words I have spoken to you," the man is writing under the direct dictation of the Holy Spirit, and thus his work can be presumed to be free of any error or inaccuracy.

Another prophet, writing under the *inspiration* of the Holy Spirit, rather than the direct *dictation* of the Holy Spirit, however, can be used by God to convey an idea rather than a specific message. (Perhaps as he writes poetically or metaphorically.) Because of this, it might be possible to split hairs, and detect a technical "error" in such a passage. However, such incidents, if they exist, would not compromise the overall idea that God means to convey. Thus, any good Bible—be it translation or paraphrase—can impart the inerrant overall messages that God wishes humanity to have. This is because when the Scriptures speak regarding areas of "**doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness**" (2 Tim. 3:16), they are absolutely inerrant. *If* it's possible for "errors" to be present anywhere in the text of Scripture, they will always deal with extraneous points of minutiae that have no bearing on any issues of consequence, or they will trace themselves to our mistranslating, misunderstanding, or misusing the text.

Why the King James Version and a paraphrase?

I chose the King James Bible as the foundation text of this commentary because it has withstood the test of time, and is unsurpassed as the best version to memorize passages from. Unfortunately, its archaic English, and the texts it employed in its creation, are causing this historic Bible to lose relevancy and influence in the face of more modern translations. It is the hope of the author to strengthen the KJV by buttressing it with both a paraphrase and commentary notes so that it will continue to have a place of eminence within Christianity. However, because it was the most widely used English Bible for so long, some of its flaws became accepted as norms in Christianity. An example is the false teaching that "Lucifer" was once the proper name of the devil. In fact, it was simply a Latin word referring to Venus (the Morning Star) that appeared in the Vulgate, and the KJV translators, to the detriment of accuracy, retained it in Isaiah 14. As a result, there are theologians to this day—along with people like Joseph Smith who mistakenly used it in the Mormon books he wrote—who have an incorrect belief that Lucifer was some sort of pre-fall name of the devil!

Thus, the KJV is no perfect transmission to us from the hand of God! It has many flaws, some serious. But since no Bible is perfect, there is no basis to dismiss it in favor of less-known translations even if they are a bit more precise through using better texts than those available in the 17th century. Where the KJV uses a flawed translation, or where text was improperly added by the translators or earlier scribes, the commentary notes or paraphrase will address it.

As stated earlier, the reason for the paraphrase is that many people—especially ministers and theologians—using the King James Bible rarely, if ever, go beyond a superficial understanding of the words they see, misunderstanding hosts of passages because of the archaic English they are written in.

For instance, if you read 1st Corinthians 16:13, where Paul says to, "**quit you like men**," a normal person of average education will never comprehend that Paul means something along the lines of, "Act like mature men," unless someone explains that to him or if he reads that in a commentary note.

Apart from that, some of the New Testament epistles weren't written in a way that we could easily see and understand exactly what they mean. Originally, they were written down and then a messenger would have been briefed on what the writer (for instance, Paul) meant in a particular section. The messenger would then take the letter to its intended audience and read it, explaining what it meant as he did.

The problem for us is that we don't have the messenger to explain it! Thus, we are sometimes left with only a skeleton that outlines the writer's main points without flushing them out sufficiently so that we can understand exactly what he means. We must therefore rely on our own theological worldviews, or commentaries from theologians sometimes centuries removed from the days the text was written in, to speculate on what the New Testament writers meant. This is why theologians frequently disagree on the meaning of certain passages.

This is especially true in the case of Paul. His supernatural understanding of the Scriptures, coupled with a very fallible writing style, is why we've wound up with so many different denominational interpretations of his words, and why his writings continue to be misunderstood to this day by many people.

Here is one example from Romans 3:31: **Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

This is a perfect example of Paul's leaving us a skeleton with no meat on it whatsoever. And naturally, theologians debate what he means in these two sentences. Many teachers, considering only the one brief sentence about establishing the Law, try to reduce Paul's meaning there *down* to one brief sentence: that we put the Law on its proper footing through faith. However, a comparison of this verse with the theme of Romans, and the statements Paul has been making up to this point, can allow us to flush the verse out and determine his actual train of thought, along with the

full implications of what he is saying in the verse, which actually go far beyond the two simple sentence that he wrote. These points can then be written down in a commentary note to help a reader understand the depth of the verse.

Unfortunately, normal people hate reading commentary notes! This is why the paraphrase will often expand the *text itself*--since that's about the most we teachers can hope to get you to read--to impart its full meaning for the reader who does not have the messenger to explain what the writer originally meant, just as I would explain it were I writing a full commentary or discussing in detail a passage in a Bible study. Below is an example of the paraphrased Romans 3:31, showing how it amplifies the verse to convey Paul's full thoughts behind the statement:

Actual text: **Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

Paraphrased text: *But do we make void the Torah in the sense of now having a license to sin because we've come to faith? God forbid! Rather, we actually stand on, and accomplish, what the Torah teaches[--the need to come to faith to achieve true righteousness before God!].*

The fact is, most Christians--even ministers--do not have the training or skill to look at many hard Bible verses like this and understand them clearly. If you were to ask many to explain this verse, you might get a blank stare; a heretical speculation that this means we must keep the Law of Moses if we come to faith in Christ; that we must keep the 10 Commandments; or else an off-the-cuff speculation that if we have faith in Christ, we're not under the Law at all!

This work is consequently written in order to *teach* and *explain* the writings of the New Testament--and especially the King James Bible--rather than to simply make the actual text a bit easier to read, which would still leave the reader confused in many instances about what a verse actually means. Thus, by teaming up the KJV with a paraphrase, those who appreciate the King James Bible will hopefully understand it to a greater degree, while those employing other fine Bibles may find this work to be a useful supplement to whatever Bible they normally study from.

Now as good as the King James Bible may be in some ways, it is also guilty of some very bad translations despite what some of its proponents think. The paraphrase will correct some of that, but there won't be a footnote every time it's done since too many footnotes will cause the important facts to be swallowed up by listing a bunch of minutiae. Thus, every so often you might see the paraphrase translate something in a completely different way than that of the King James translators without an explanation. While occasionally this will be because the author has simply made a mistake, often it will be because he believes there is a better rendering of the verse than the King James translators came up with. A quick glance at a direct translation Bible, or checking a Greek interlinear Bible, might help the reader understand the author's rationale in some cases.

Another major problem with most Bibles is the way the Scriptures are divided into verses*, often breaking up one sentence or paragraph into as many as eleven (!) verses, causing the reader to miss the impact of what's written as he pauses to drop down to the next verse and pick up reading again. Here is a great example from Philippians 3:8-11:

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

The paraphrase restores it into one long sentence as it was originally written:

Yes, undoubtedly I count everything to be worth losing for the priceless knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things--considering them dung--that I may obtain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness based on Torah observance, but the righteousness which comes from God through faith alone, so that I may know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, conforming to the pattern of his death if by any means I can likewise attain the resurrection from the dead.

Paul, of course, is notorious for his run-on sentences. Because of this, there will be places where the verses are reorganized for easier reading on the part of a Western audience, where the rules of language differ somewhat from that of the East. (Remember, Eastern people also read and write from right to left as well!)

* Numbered Bible verses originated with a Jewish rabbi of the 1400s who applied the idea to the Old Testament. The idea was later adopted by Robert Stephanus, a printer in the 1500s, who did likewise with the New Testament as he traveled about on horseback.

Christian anti-Semitism and its effect on the New Testament.

There is no question that in some places Christian animosity toward unbelieving Jews resulted in the translation of the New Testament being diluted and altered from its original meaning—but only on non-critical issues. For instance, ancient scribes, and the later translators of the KJV, sometimes sought to distance the translation from Judaism as much as possible, resulting at times in a slanted portrayal of the text. Here is an example:

James 2:2 traditional translation: **For if there come unto your assembly** a man with a gold ring...**

James 2:2 actual translation: **For if there come unto your *synagogue* a man with a gold ring...**

** This is the same word conveniently translated as *synagogue* if the sense is to be negative, such as Rev. 2:9, “**The *synagogue* of Satan.**”

The good news is that the important issues of theology dealing with salvation haven’t been compromised. But error is still error, and only bad fruit can come of it. As a result, some have used the words of the New Testament to justify anti-Semitism, while the Jews, meanwhile, concluded that Christianity taught hatred of them as a people.

One can hardly blame either side when we see apparent wide-sweeping condemnation of “**The Jews**” and “**The Pharisees**” without an educated understanding that: 1--the word “**Jew**,” when used in a negative sense, is often more correctly translated as “**Judean**”***; and 2--that the problem with “**The Pharisees**” traces itself not to the entire movement, but to only one particular group of ultra-conservative Pharisee hypocrites who were in power during the time of Christ, and who died out by the end of the 1st century to be replaced by the more liberal group of Pharisees Jesus often got along with, whose leaders He quoted, whose oral traditions He sometimes observed, and with whom He had relatively few complaints. (This is covered in, *What you never knew about the Pharisees.*)

*** In the time of the Gospels, there was much regional animosity between the Judeans and other Jews, much like the animosity between the Yankees and Southerners, or the arrogance of Parisians toward other Frenchmen--and much of the condemnation of “**The Jews**” is more of a cultural than a racial or religious bias. A perfect example of this can be shown in the ridiculous traditional translation of John 11:8: **His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?** The disciples, not to mention Jesus Christ, were themselves Jews, and would no more speak such a nonsensical sentence than a Californian would say to a Texan, “Of late, the *Americans* sought to stone thee.” What they actually said was: “**Master, the *Judeans* of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?**”

Common misunderstandings within the New Testament.

Apart from the term “**The Jews**,” there are some words used in the New Testament that had different meanings in that time and culture than they do today. They include:

Believe. In our culture, this word is typically understood as intellectually accepting that something is true. However, biblical use of the word means to *rely on* or consciously *place faith in* something, akin to the trust one has that a cane will keep his disabled leg from giving way, causing him to fall to the ground. The paraphrase will sometimes use the term *place faith in* as a substitute for the word *believe*.

Heaven. While we think of this word as referring to where God lives, often it is referring to either the sky, or else to what we call *space*.

Kingdom of God/Kingdom of heaven. By and large, these are synonymous terms referring to the Age brought about by the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom. The Paraphrase will sometimes use the term *Messianic Kingdom* in place of these terms.

Law/Law & the Prophets. The word *Law* is the most misunderstood word in the Bible. In Hebrew, the word is *Torah*, which means *Instruction*. Often, *Law* seems to convey something negative, taking it from something that Paul says is holy, and instead making it something to be shunned. It would be helpful to substitute the term *God’s commandments* in your mind when you see the word *Law* mentioned (though the word can also mean the Pentateuch or Old Testament as a whole). This will help understand the Torah to be the righteous commandments of God without over-exalting it. It is also helpful to understand that the Jews break the commandments down into three categories:

Mishpatim--Civil and Moral laws like, “**Thou shalt not kill.**” (For us, the moral laws in the *Mishpatim* are the unchanging heart of the Law that have existed from the creation of man before any written law was ever given.)

Edos--Witnesses to the Jewish faith or the will and nature of God. (Jewish ritual baptism falls into this category along with things like wearing prayer shawls or *tefillin*.)

Chukim--Commandments that were given without an explanation as to why they should be followed. (Such as the ceremonial and dietary laws--and also the various Sabbath commands.)

Introduction

The term *Law & the Prophets*, meanwhile, had two meanings: The Old Testament writings as a whole (as we view the phrase), but to the Jews it often referred to the written Law and the oral traditions on how to keep it.

Lawlessness. The term is best understood as a rejection of the moral precepts of the Torah/Law of God.

Meat. Typically, this word simply means food of any sort. To avoid confusion, however, the author treats it literally.

Scribes. These were not copyists, but teachers and interpreters--on an official level--of the Law of Moses.

Servant. The word should usually be translated as *slave*.

Sinners. In the Gospels are sentences like: **This man eateth and drinketh with sinners**. *Sinners* is more than just a term for unrighteous people. In that time, the "People of the soil"--or, "the Sinners"--were a classification created by the Pharisees to label the vast majority of Jews who failed to walk in the various written and oral laws with an approved degree of commitment.

Son of God/Son of Man. Originally, *Son of God* was not a reference to the virgin birth or that Jesus is the 2nd person of the Trinity. (Although I affirm both doctrines.) The term was synonymous with "Messiah" or "King of Israel." In fact, any Jewish king from Solomon forward**** was called both "Son of God" and "Messiah" (meaning *anointed*). While the phrase sometimes does refer to Christ as the 2nd person of the Trinity, most of the time it means to make the claim that Jesus is *the* Messiah and King of Israel. Meanwhile, the term *Son of Man* (or *bar Enash* in the original language) has a dual meaning: One the listeners would view as, "I'm no one special," but at the same time it ultimately declares that Jesus is the immortal and supernatural Messiah of Dan. 7:13.

**** This was based on God's promise to David that He would be like a father to Solomon (2 Sam. 7:14).

Spirit. Among the uses for this word in the East, *spirit* can mean something along the lines of a prophetic teaching, a prophetic utterance, or a mystic interpretation of Scripture. If you don't realize that, you may misunderstand a few verses in the New Testament using the word in that way when they say things like: **"Now the Lord is that Spirit,"** **"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,"** and so on.

Weak. Often, Paul uses the word *weak*, *weakness*, or *infirmities* not to refer our frailty or lack of strength, but rather to a lack of knowledge or understanding, and we must look at the context to determine which way he is using the word. An example is Romans 14:1, which refers to someone **"weak in the faith,"** who is still bound by some religious dietary laws due to his lack of full understanding. Even the word *faith* itself is arguably used a handful of times (Matt 16:8, 2 Cor. 10:15) as a synonym *for* knowledge or understanding because the Jews considered knowledge and understanding of God and His ways to be a component part of one's faith.

Works. The word can refer to religious or ceremonial observances, miracles, or to good or bad deeds.

Apart from these examples, many statements in the New Testament are idiomatic. Just as we might use phrases like, "It's raining cats and dogs," or, "Give me your John Hancock," Eastern people used many phrases that had a different meaning from the sum of the words. Some of these you may recognize: *Thou hast said it*; *The day and the hour*; *Give God the glory*; *Reigned as kings*; *I never knew you*; *Bought with a price*; and *Smite you on the cheek* are all idioms.

At times, different regions might use the same language differently, and sometimes we must go beyond what the words seem to say in order to find out what they really mean. A friend of mine, for example, once went to visit relatives in Mexico. While there, she told her grandmother, *"I'll be back later,"* using California Spanish. The woman got a very puzzled look on her face at hearing that, because the same words that mean, *"I'll be back later"* to a Mexican-American from California mean, *"I'll walk backwards"* to an actual Mexican, even though both speak Spanish!

There are some cases where the New Testament arguably presents similar problems for us in our Western culture.

Some final notes about the Paraphrase.

Ultimately, the author can do no more than offer up his views based on over 50 years of studying history and the Bible with an open mind, trying to get to what the Scriptures actually teach, irrespective of pre-conceived doctrinal notions. Thus, the reader will undoubtedly find things he likes and dislikes, along with things he agrees or disagrees with. It must also be acknowledged that some fine theologians would have different opinions than the author on some points, and the reader should reference a variety of views on certain passages to come to his own view on which position seems most reasonable. So check what the Catholic believes. Check what the Protestant believes. Consider the view of the Dispensationalist and the Amillennialist, the Charismatic and the Cessationist, the Calvinist and Arminian. See what makes sense to you, and cleave to that which is true. There are numerous arguable issues of biblical theology,

and beyond the essentials of who Christ is and the means of salvation, we can all vigorously argue our positions so long as we can also admit that we can always be wrong.

Keep in mind that a paraphrase reflects the writer's own views, *so it will always have error, here and there, due to the writer's fallible understanding of the Bible!* Thus, a paraphrase--no matter how good--should never be considered inerrant to the degree a real translation like the KJV is. This is why you should never view any paraphrase or thought-for-thought Bible translation as an authoritative exposition of Scripture, but merely the understanding one person or group has about the Scriptures, which may or may not be wholly accurate. Having said that, the reader should still understand that even true Bibles choose some differing biblical texts over others; then add, delete, or flavor text to impart what the translators believe the original text means in the receptor language, again making even the best Bible translation fallible and in error, here and there, because of the translators' own prejudices.

One example is in Isaiah 34:14. In Hebrew, it incorporates the name of the female demon Lilith. Theologians, however--not just in the case of the KJV, but in most other Gentile-published Bibles--are uncomfortable with the fact that the Bible speaks about a female demon, and so they change the actual Scripture by taking it upon themselves to substitute everything from the words *night creature* to *screech owl* in place of Lilith's actual name to avoid having to deal with the problem of the actual Hebrew text!***** If these same theologians believe the Scriptures are inerrant and should not be altered, one wonders why they see the need to improve upon what God has written by deleting the name of a demon simply because they do not like its implications.

***** Apart from most Jewish Bibles, I can only recall a few Gentile-published Bibles that keep Lilith's name in the passage. By the way, the myth that she was Adam's first wife is a newer, revisionist legend from hundreds of years after Christ. In ancient times, Lilith was a demon of lust who may have had some identification with Isis, Hathor, and a variety of other goddesses. Many rabbis also believed that she was the 'Night Terror' of Psalm 91 as the word for "Night" there is "Lil" or "Layil."

Vince Garcia (vgarcia@ix.netcom.com)
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Holy Bible (from the Vulgate) by Monsignor Ronald Knox, published by Baronius Press.
Jerusalem Bible by J. R. R. Tolkien (among others).
Jesus the Pharisee by Rabbi Harvey Falk.
Jesus the Jewish Theologian by Brad H. Young.
Jerusalem in the time of Jesus by Dr. Joachim Jeremias. (An absolute must-read for any student of biblical history!)
The Jewish Encyclopedia by Funk & Wagnalls.
Jewish New Testament & Jewish New Testament Commentary by David Stern.
Jewish Sources in Early Christianity by David Flusser.
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Life & Times of Jesus the Messiah by Dr. Alfred Edersheim.
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What you never knew about the Pharisees

The world of Jesus and the apostles

To interpret the New Testament it is essential that one have an understanding of the world of the founders of Christianity. Because it has lacked this, the Christian church has misunderstood much of the New Testament and arrived at several incorrect assumptions including:

Jesus and the apostles were rejecting Judaism and its Law, and starting an entirely new religion.

Paul was anti-Semitic.

It was the “Jews” and “Pharisees” who persecuted and crucified Jesus.

The Jews have rejected their Messiah, so the Christian church has replaced Israel in God’s plan.

All of these commonly-held beliefs within Christianity are either untrue, or at best partially true. To address them properly, we must first go back to the time of Christ and take a look at the world Jesus and the apostles lived in.

In the years before the rise of Rome, the Jews after centuries of captivity finally won their freedom from a tyrannical Syrian king named Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the greatest despots of the ancient world. (You can read about this struggle if you get a Catholic Bible and go to the books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees.) The belief among the Jews was that God had punished Israel by delivering it into the hands of occupying nations for its failure to follow the Law of Moses. Now, with their freedom finally won, some key leaders of the Jews resolved that they would never again come under bondage from their rebellion, and so they determined they would follow God and honor His commandments so that Israel would know His blessings rather than His curses and punishments. In its zeal to observe the commandments, the nation gave birth to several fanatical groups dedicated to promoting holiness. At the forefront of this movement was a group that came to be known to us as...

The Pharisees

The word *Pharisee* meant something along the lines of “pure,” or “separated,” and was an apt term for this group of ultra-Orthodox men who distanced themselves from the unrighteous, while they established many extraneous commandments in connection with their pursuit of holiness. In the time of Jesus there were several thousand Pharisees in Israel led by two main schools of philosophy:

The School of Shammai. It is difficult for us, in our culture, to comprehend the structure of the theocratic government of Israel in the time of Christ. But the most important group in Israel was the Pharisees who sat under the teachings of a rabbi named Shammai, who founded his school shortly before Jesus was born. The closest example in our world to understanding them would be to equate them with Mullah Omar and the Taliban, for they were ultra-conservative religious fundamentalists with a pathological devotion to obeying hosts of man-made traditions and commandments. Most believed that the Hebrew descendants of Abraham were the only people God cared for, and that non-Jews were of little or no value in His sight. Salvation was thus only available to Jews--and so, in their early days, the Shammaiites wouldn’t even welcome Gentile converts to Judaism.

This attitude caused Pharisees from the school of Shammai to hate all Gentiles, and left them with little regard even for *Jews* who didn’t follow them. (In one case, nearly attacking the sage Hillel for bringing a sacrifice to the Temple on a day they disapproved of.) In the days of Shammai, so passionate was their hatred of Gentiles that around 10 AD, Shammai passed 18 edicts specifically meant to force separation between Jews and Gentiles. The specifics of all these edicts have been lost, but among them was a prohibition of entering the house of a Gentile, lest a Jew thereby become defiled, and even eating with or purchasing food from a Gentile was forbidden.

Because Shammai’s word was law, these edicts became laws of Israel. Thus, when you read, for instance, of Peter being criticized for entering the house of a Gentile and eating with him, this criticism traces itself to the edicts passed by this school, which were apparently being followed by the Christian Jews in the earliest days of the church.

The school of Shammai, which was politically proactive, also had close ties to the infamous *Zealots*, a group of fanatics who favored armed revolt against Rome. It’s critical for you to note that virtually every time you see Jesus or the apostles in strife against what the Bible labels as “**Pharisees**,” it is almost certainly referring to Pharisees or

ex-Pharisees from the School of Shammai. Even before he became a Christian, Paul would have had many differences with his fellow Pharisees from this school, which would be the dominant influence in Judaism until the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

Of lesser influence in Israel was...

The School of Hillel. The school of Hillel was far more liberal, and its founder renowned for placing people and justice at the heart of Judaism in contrast to Shammai, who focused on strict observance of religious laws.*

* To give one example of just how legalistic Shammai was, Jewish history records that when his daughter-in-law gave birth to a son during *Sukkot*--when the people built tabernacles to stay in for that Festival--Shammai tore the roof off the daughter-in-law's room, and had the bed covered over with boughs so his newborn grandson wouldn't be in technical violation of a commandment! In another incident, he even had to be shamed by his fellow rabbis into allowing a hungry child to be fed during a period when the Jews were required to fast.

While Hillel's followers acknowledged that the Jews were God's special people, they willingly accepted Gentile converts to Judaism in the belief that God allowed all to worship Him who would turn from idolatry. When you read about Hellenistic Jews--or about Jews with Greek names--this was the school whose rabbis would typically have accepted these Gentiles into the Jewish faith. (This school, however, was not specifically a Hellenistic movement.)

Soon after the time when Jesus, at age 12, was in the Temple astonishing the priests with his wisdom, Hillel (with whom Jesus may have been interacting) died and was eventually succeeded by his grandson Gamaliel, who was Paul's tutor. Modern-day Judaism traces its roots to the teachings promoted by the followers of Hillel who survived the destruction of Jerusalem and began codifying their teachings around 200 AD.

Hillel was so wise that even the Golden Rule, which we commonly attribute to Jesus, was adopted from the apocrypha and popularized earlier by Hillel before his death, and was being quoted by Jesus in the Gospels to those who already knew it. Whenever you see Jesus interacting positively** with the Pharisees (for instance, with Nicodemus or the rich young ruler), he is probably interacting with Pharisees from the school of Hillel.

A good example of the differences between Hillel and Shammai can be seen in the many cases where **"The Pharisees"** watch Jesus to see if He will heal someone on the Sabbath. We can reasonably surmise that these are Shammaiites by the fact that the school of Shammai viewed attending to a sick person on the Sabbath as work, while the school of Hillel viewed this as a good deed that was permissible on the Sabbath.

Another example of the struggle over Jesus between both schools is seen in John 9:16: **Therefore said some of the Pharisees** (probably from the school of Shammai) **This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others** (probably from the school of Hillel) **said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.**

On one hand, you can see the school of Shammai rejecting Jesus outright while Pharisees from the school of Hillel aren't sure. This also helps illustrate the philosophical differences between the two schools, with the Shammaiites holding to a legalistic requirement that absolute rest must be observed on the Sabbath, while the Hillelites are open to the idea that healing is a good deed, and thus permissible on the Sabbath.

In another case, Matthew 19:3 clearly shows Pharisees from the school of Hillel **'testing'** Jesus on the question of divorce, which they allowed for almost any reason. Despite knowing this group is specifically trying to trick Him, Jesus avoids the tongue-lashing He delivers to Shammaiites in chapter 12 (calling those Pharisees a **"Generation of vipers"**) and merely answers the question.

** This is not to say that the school of Hillel was without problems. Among them was the fact that the Pharisees could not divorce themselves from the idea that they were righteous men because, in their view, they followed God's commandments--some sincerely, some hypocritically. This caused them initially to reject the ministry of John the Baptist, and by this to ultimately be removed from the plan God had for them even before they rejected Christ (Luke 7:30). Hillel, for all his good qualities, also expressed the view that only the sages who followed the commandments were the true people of God, but where he and Shammai would have differed is that Shammai would have held the sinful masses in contempt, while Hillel would have hoped they could have been encouraged to embrace righteousness.

The Pharisees also favored the rich over the poor because of the prevailing attitude that poverty was a sign of the curse of God, while prosperity was believed to show the approval of God on one's life. (This, despite the fact that Hillel was himself a relatively poor man.)

The attitude sometimes carried over into the Sanhedrin's legislative abilities, and so the Pharisees were known on occasion to abuse the right given them under the Law of Moses to enact laws clarifying points that the greater Law did

not directly address. This had the effect, in some cases, of subverting the principles of the Law to favor those of wealth and power, something Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for. An example is Hillel's institution of the *prosbol*, which overturned the requirement of debts being forgiven or property having to be returned to its original owner during Sabbath years. Hillel's well-meant intention was to help the less fortunate who were finding that their fellow Jews would not loan money to them as a Sabbath year approached, and the thought was that by exempting certain transactions from being canceled upon arrival of such a year, needy Jews would have a greater chance at receiving help. The foreseeable result, of course, was that some who got into debt never found a way out, and were kept in bondage to the lender, or else their land effectively passed to the creditor, despite the fact that the Torah forbade it.

Shammai, meanwhile, went even further in favoring the wealthy, holding the view that only the rich should be taught the Scriptures, saying: "Don't instruct a man unless he is wise, meek, and the son of wealthy parents." (Babylonian Talmud supplement Aboth de R. Nathan A3.)

While Jesus was frustrated over the Pharisees' conscious denial that they were sinners because of their perceived obedience to the commandments, philosophically He and the school of Hillel did have much in common, just as an evangelical Christian might relate in many ways to a conservative politician, although there might still be major differences between them. Paul, it must be remembered, was from the school of Hillel and rabidly anti-Christian. Gamaliel, in contrast, appeared to be somewhat tolerant of the movement, and the fact that Paul relates that he sought out the High Priest for the authority to persecute Christians, rather than his own tutor who headed the Sanhedrin, may suggest there was disagreement between Paul and Gamaliel on how to handle the followers of Christ. However, since Jesus got on well with some key members of the school of Hillel, coupled with the fact that He quotes Hillel, He must have found some good in the school, unlike that of Shammai, which He regularly opposed.

Despite this, the Gospels show that the school of Hillel as a whole ultimately rejected Christ, although this appears to have been motivated by the fact that He laid too many theological bombshells on them by claiming to be God in the flesh, and so--perhaps reluctantly--the key members of the school of Hillel rejected Him because they just couldn't make the transition in thought from a rabbinic to a Christian understanding of what the Messiah would be. In contrast, the school of Shammai simply rejected Him out of spite and bitterness.

As the years passed, Israel was again brought under subjection to its enemies--this time, Rome--and the response in the minds of many of the Pharisees was to presume that this was God's punishment for Israel's failure once again at obeying the commandments with enough zeal. Thus, they became even more fanatical at keeping the Law, formulating hosts of rules and regulations created with the intention of regulating every aspect of Jewish life in the belief that this would guarantee their obedience to the commandments and either result in God's freeing the nation or else sending the promised Messiah who would deliver the nation from bondage. Thus, the Pharisees in many ways became the Thought Police of Israel, forcing the ordinary citizens to observe their customs so that Israel would regain its independence.

While they had no direct oversight of the Temple, the Pharisees controlled the synagogues, and this was the base of their power.

Now someone might say: "Well, I believe the Bible as written, and you seem to make a distinction between these two groups, while it doesn't, so I think they were *all* bad!"

I have no problem with someone who takes the Bible at face value. My point is not to say that the Bible offers untruths about the Pharisees--but that a surface reading of what it says paints a distorted picture if one doesn't know the full background of the times.

We can prove this by the case of Pontius Pilate. If all we had was the Gospels to go by, the picture we would probably draw from him was that he was basically an honorable ruler who sincerely made every attempt to keep an innocent man from being crucified. The truth is, non-biblical history shows he was a despot so extreme in his cruelties that even Vitellius, the Syrian governor in authority over him, expelled him from office. (Then, after being ordered back to Rome to face charges, he committed suicide.) In the one instance we see of his life, however, the Gospels show that--probably from the influence of the Holy Spirit temporarily neutralizing any demonic influence on him so that mankind alone would be responsible for the Crucifixion--he acted in an almost compassionate manner.

After the Pharisees, there was one other important group in Israel...

The Sadducees

The Sadducees take their name from the priest Zadok, who supported Solomon against Adonijah when he attempted to appoint himself King of Israel. (See the 1st chapter of 1st Chronicles.) Unlike the Pharisees, who were made up of both rabbis and influential lay people, the Sadducees were priests who controlled the Temple in Jerusalem, the heart of Jewish worship. They rejected the oral traditions of the Pharisees, and had a number of odd religious beliefs that

What you never knew about the Pharisees

included denying the reality of spirits, the Resurrection, the existence of Satan, the supernatural, miracles, and a coming Messiah. In the time of Jesus the head of the Sadducees was the priest Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas. Annas was so influential that six of his sons or relatives occupied the position of High Priest in the Temple during his lifetime. He and his cronies were effectively the local Mafia in Jerusalem, and were hated by the people for their abuses. They were so unpopular that some Jewish writings from the 1st century survive that reveal the feelings the common people had for them:

*Woe is me because of the house of Boethus!
Woe is me because of their clubs!
Woe is me because of the house of Hanan! (Annas)
Woe is me because of their whisperings!
Woe is me because of the house of Kantheras! (Caiaphas)
Woe is me because of their pen!
Woe is me because of the house of Ishmael!
Woe is me because of their fists!
For they are the High Priests;
Their sons are the treasurers;
Their sons-in-law are the Temple officials;
And their servants beat the people with clubs!
--Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 57a.*

The Sadducees also had a group of high-ranking priests within them known as the *Herodians*, who had ties to Herod Antipas, and sought to return the Herods to full control of the land.

While the Sadducees were few in number, their control of the Temple, coupled with their wealth, gave them an important position of authority within...

The Sanhedrin

The word *Sanhedrin* refers to a religious court. In the time of Christ, there were two Sanhedrins operating in Jerusalem, the first of which was a 23-member court run by the Sadducees that handled local affairs. Acts 5:25 shows this group and the Great Sanhedrin coming together to discuss the problem of the Christians.

Its larger counterpart, the Great Sanhedrin, was comprised of 70 elders with a president, who in the time of Jesus was Gamaliel. The body functioned much like a combination of the Senate and Supreme Court, and most of its members at the time of the Crucifixion were Pharisees from the school of Shammai.*** You will note in Acts that Gamaliel, the president of the Great Sanhedrin, encouraged tolerance of the Christians, but because he and his followers were outnumbered by Sadducees and Shammaiite Pharisees, the Great Sanhedrin ultimately elected to persecute the Christians. At the trial of Jesus before the elders of Israel, Gamaliel (and certainly Paul) may not have been in Jerusalem, although the circumstances that would have prevented this would have been extraordinary. The quorum held to try Jesus was hurriedly assembled and included, almost across the board, members who were either Sadducees, or else Pharisees from the school of Shammai, while possibly only Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea represented the school of Hillel. The outcome was inevitable, especially because of the threat Jesus posed to the Sadducees.

In their view, this man was an unparalleled danger who stood in direct contradiction to their theology across the board. For one, he is casting out devils the Sadducees deny exist. He miraculously resurrects Lazarus just three miles from Jerusalem in the presence of numerous witnesses including hostile Pharisees, and--worst of all--he presents himself at the Temple during Passover when the city swelled to over a million Jews, and declares he is a Messiah the Sadducees deny is coming. Thus, in their own self-interest, the Sadducees, more so than the Pharisees (some of whom certainly did want Jesus dead), forced the issue of trying and slaying Jesus.

Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that the Sadducees, and *not* the Pharisees...

Arranged with Judas to betray Christ (Matt. 26).
Set a guard at the tomb (Matt. 27).
Arrested the apostles (Acts 5).
Gave letters to Paul authorizing the persecution of the church in Damascus (Acts 9).

*** In the time of Hillel and Shammai, both men co-chaired leadership of the Great Sanhedrin, with Hillel heading the body during times of general assembly and Shammai holding the position when the body met as a court of law. If this tradition held over to the time of the Crucifixion, and if it was the Great Sanhedrin that put Christ on trial (unlikely), someone from the school of Shammai might have overseen the tribunal during the trial of Jesus without the need of Gamaliel's presence. That, or Caiaphas may have presided over the meeting.

What you never knew about the Pharisees

All three groups, despite their differences, had two things in common: They all believed that a man was declared by God to be righteous based on his obedience to the commandments, and they didn't consider themselves sinners because of their zeal in obeying those commandments.****

**** In Jewish thought there were three classes of people: The *unrighteous* (who were predestined for hell), the *sinners* (the average people who needed to come into full compliance with the commandments), and the *righteous* (or *saints*), who followed the commandments. Of these groups, only the righteous had their names written in the Book of Life. When Jesus warns that someone who calls his brother "**raka**" is in danger of hellfire, He is referring to someone, who, in a Calvinistic manner, labels a fellow Jew as predestined to be one of the *rashim*--the Unrighteous who are bound for hell and have no hope of repentance. Beyond that, this train of thought was itself flawed in that it missed the fact that all are ultimately sinners, and that the only true *tzadikim*--"righteous ones"--are those who are justified by faith in Messiah apart from obeying the commandments. But this does help us understand the philosophical viewpoint of the religious leaders at the time, and how that those who would be accepted by God would have to divorce themselves from the thought that obedience to the commandments was the direct foundation of how one gained eternal life.

Pharisees in the Book of Acts

The Sadducees begin to disappear from Scripture after the Crucifixion, although they were major persecutors of Paul and the Jerusalem church. However, many of the heresies in the church *outside* of Jerusalem traced themselves to Pharisees that had been brought up in the school of Shammai. Some of these actually converted to Christianity, and when you read in Acts about some "**Pharisees which believed**," this passage speaks of those who were primarily from the school of Shammai. These Pharisees kept their philosophies, and opposed Gentiles coming into the faith, despite Peter's revelation with Cornelius in Acts 10. However, other proselytes from the school of Hillel outnumbered them, and thus Gentiles were accepted as converts.

The biggest argument within the church during this period centered on whether the Gentile converts needed to convert to Judaism, become circumcised, and obey the Law of Moses--or whether they could be accepted by God solely by their faith in the Messiah apart from keeping the Law. The conclusion by James and the other elders in the Christian Sanhedrin *they* formed was that the Gentiles should only observe some basic negative commandments and become a part of the church without need of being circumcised.

Christian Pharisees from the school of Shammai adamantly opposed this decision. In their view, Jesus was a Messiah only for the Jews, and Gentiles had no place in the church. Nor did they necessarily believe that one could be saved only by faith--for they still held to the idea that righteousness and salvation was directly tied to obeying all the commandments of the Law.*****

Their solution, in protest, was to form cliques and send out representatives to the Gentile churches overseen by Paul, teaching new converts that they must become circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. This probably wasn't done out of a sincere disagreement with Paul, but these *Judaizers* may have taught this doctrine to the Gentiles with the specific intention of causing them to become disillusioned and drop out of the church.

***** Pharisees from the school of Hillel would have had an easier time with this concept, although they too would need to change their way of thinking. Further, to get an idea of how inflammable the concept of Gentiles being allowed salvation was, read Acts chapter 22, in particular verse 22. You will notice that as Paul speaks to a hostile crowd of Jews (made up primarily of Shammaiites), they listen patiently as he declares that Jesus is the Messiah. Only when he claims that God sent him to the Gentiles does the crowd instantly explode and seek to stone him on the spot!

You can see the fruit of the actions of the Judaizers in the Book of Galatians. Paul goes absolutely ballistic over the fact that the Galatians have left the understanding of salvation through faith in order to start practicing circumcision and obeying the Law of Moses as instructed by these Shammai-taught Pharisees. He even goes so far as to wish these former Pharisees who interfered with his converts would emasculate themselves! Despite this, Paul never divorced himself from his Pharisee upbringing in the school of Hillel. In fact, in Acts 23:6, Paul states: "**I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees.**" In Greek, this is written in the continuing present tense, showing that Paul is asserting he *continues* to be a Pharisee, not that he *had once been* a Pharisee! The error on the part of Christianity (and Judaism) has been in failing to realize that Paul was simultaneously moving in two different worlds: a Torah-observant Jewish world, and a non-observant Gentile world; and Paul's writings to the latter leave some with the false impression he was teaching that Mosaic Law has no place in Christianity for anyone. (Actually, his issue was only with Jews trying to indoctrinate Gentiles into circumcision and Jewish Law. This is because the train of thought behind this indoctrination is to deny the full sufficiency of Christ's atonement to place men in right standing with God; and it is also a denial of the New covenant in Christ's blood that supercedes the Old covenant of commandments and animal sacrifice for failing to keep those commandments perfectly.)

As time progressed, the church became so filled with Gentiles and with Jews who were not adherents to the teachings of Shammai that the influence of the Judaizers waned until it died out altogether, although some of these Pharisees

What you never knew about the Pharisees

were probably absorbed into the *Ebionites*, a Christian-Jewish sect that accepted Christ as Messiah but rejected the writings of Paul. They survived in Judea until Constantine.

The School of Shammai, meanwhile, took a major hit when the revolt of AD 66-70 failed, and when a “heavenly voice” in AD 70 was supposedly heard in Yavneh instructing the Jews to follow the rulings of Hillel over Shammai. Interestingly, the term *Pharisee* also starts disappearing as the school of Shammai itself starts diminishing to be replaced by the ascendancy of the school of Hillel.

Thus, the influence of the (Jewish) Pharisees in the church withered until it died out. Ironically, many of the Gentiles who would assume leadership of the faith would fall into the same pattern followed by their Pharisee predecessors over the centuries, creating hosts of man-made doctrines meant to force believers into compliance with religious commandments, so we Gentiles are ultimately no better than the Jews who preceded us.

Finally, the greatest tragedy has been in Christianity’s failure to realize who the true enemies of the Gospel really were, and thus Jews throughout the ages have suffered persecution by some “Christians” who were too ignorant to realize that the real enemy died out in the 1st century.

What you never knew about the New Testament's view of the Law

One thing most of Christianity is unaware of is just how the Jews applied the Law of Moses to Gentiles in the time of Christ. As noted in the article about Pharisees, the dominant school of Pharisees, the School of Shammai, did not welcome or approve of Gentile converts. The School of Hillel did, however, and there were generally two sorts of Gentile converts they accepted:

Ger tzedeks. These were full Gentile converts (called *proselytes*) to Torah-based Judaism, who underwent circumcision and thereafter observed the full range of commandments within the Law. The “Hellenistic” (or Greek) Jews would have fallen into this category, as would Apollos, Stephen, and possibly the group of Jews in Ephesus who had only known John’s baptism (Acts 19).

More importantly (for us to understand portions of the New Testament) were...

Ger toshavs. These were Gentiles who chose to worship God without making a full commitment to Judaism. They did not necessarily become circumcised, nor did they keep the full Torah—but they often observed what were called the *Noachide commandments*, several fundamental commandments Jewish tradition (incorrectly) asserted that God gave to Noah after the Ark landed. *Ger toshavs* were known as “God-fearers.” Naaman the Syrian is an Old Testament example of a God-fearer.

Cornelius, called in the New Testament “**a man who feared God**,” was probably a very religious *Ger toshav*, since it was next to impossible to be fully Torah-observant in a Roman legion.

The reason it is important to know about these two groups is that without understanding that the Jews did not necessarily require Torah observance of Gentile converts, we may become confused when we see apparently contradictory teachings in the New Testament that vary between extolling Jews keeping the Law, while suggesting to Gentiles that *they* do not need to. The reason is, both groups treated the Law differently!

Acts 15, for instance, came about because legalistic Shammaiite Pharisees (who resented Gentile converts in the first place) wanted to require the Gentiles to adhere to strict Torah-keeping as they did, whereas the Hillelites (like Paul) saw no reason for it.

The result was a ruling that seems to have applied the principles of the mythical Noachide commandments to the Gentiles, relieving them from the obligation to become fully Torah-observant.

Following is a list of both the commandments given in Acts 15 and the 7 Noachide commandments.

Commandment given in Acts 15	Noachide counterpart
Abstain from meats offered to idols	Abstain from idolatry
Abstain from fornication	Abstain from fornication/incest
Abstain from blood	Abstain from murder
Abstain from eating things strangled	Abstain from eating a living animal
	Abstain from theft
	Abstain from cursing God
	Establish courts of justice

It is apparent that the commandments issued by the Jerusalem council bear some similarity to the Noachide commandments. The last three, it will be noted, are missing, but unquestionably were and are consistent with Christian living even if not specifically stated. Even the law of establishing a court system may actually have been put into practice by the early church—Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 6, in which he rebukes the Corinthians for using pagan courts instead of being judged by “**the Saints**,” may refer to such a court system within the church.

Once we see an apparent tie-in to the mythical Noachide commandments on the part of the early New Testament church, the true view of the Law on the part of Paul and the other New Testament writers emerges and gives us a clearer insight than we had before.

How does a person get to heaven?

Would that all “Christian” denominations gave the same answer! Unfortunately, they do not. Different groups take what the Bible says about salvation and interpret it in one of two different ways, and you’ll have to weigh carefully which philosophy you’ll accept because your eternity is based on that decision.

Some denominations say that we are either fully or partially saved from hell by doing good deeds or obeying various biblical commandments. We call this philosophy a belief in being saved by *works*, and even many non-Christians believe in this salvation theology without realizing it.

Someone who thinks we’re saved by works might say things along the lines of:

“I’m going to heaven because I’m a good person.”
“As long as I follow the Ten Commandments, and live a good moral life, I’ll go to heaven.”
“I don’t smoke, drink, or commit adultery. I go to church three times a week so I’m going to heaven.”
“We’re all children of God, and only evil people like Hitler go to hell—if there *is* such a place!”
“I belong to the ----- church, and so I’m going to heaven.”
“As long as your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds--you’re in.”
“It doesn’t matter what religion you belong to so long as you’re sincere--whether you’re Christian, Jew, or Moslem, you all pray to the same God.”
“We’re all going to the same place--we’re just taking different roads to get there.”
“You know Mother Teresa and Princess Di are in heaven--look at all the things they did for people!”

A person who believes in salvation by works thinks we all go to heaven so long as we’re “Good people”; or that if we die, having done more good deeds than bad deeds, God will let us in; or that if we live what they consider to be holy lives of obedience to biblical commandments our salvation is assured.

The proof that this line of thinking is one that will damn those believing it lies in the fact that it appeals to everyone from the secular agnostic to the religious cultist. It’s actually a flawed understanding of what the Bible teaches, and that’s why the Bible says that most people—even religious ones--will die in their sins, never understanding the true simplicity of salvation.

To address the topic properly, let’s consider what is really involved in the salvation process. First, what is salvation? What exactly does it do? Jesus said it this way:

Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?
Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
--John 3:3-5.

What Jesus meant by this was that humans are born in a corrupted state. The immortal essence of a person--his spirit (frequently called a “soul,” although that’s technically incorrect)--is inherently corrupt, and a perfect God cannot endure having that corruption in His presence for all eternity. Paul referred to this as well in 1 Cor. 15:50-54:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.
Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Imagine I were to say: “You know, deep down, we all have a bit of a ‘Dark side’ to us, and if you look deep enough, you’d find it.” Most of you would agree with that statement, and you’d be right to agree, because it’s true. What most people don’t realize, however, is that our “Dark side” is what lies at the core of *every* human being. The reason we don’t see it that clearly is because that darkness is filtered through our intellect and conscience,* and by the time the filtering process is complete, it may be no more than a slight shadow that’s almost imperceptible. But it’s still there,

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just the same, and the problem is that in eternity this “Dark side” would follow a man who has not had that seed of evil within him rooted out by the regenerating power of the Spirit. When the unsaved stand before God at the Last Judgment, their “Dark side” will be drawn out of them like a magnet once all the grace of conscience God gave them in life is forever removed. Then the full depth of the capacity for evil within each man will be manifested and drawn past the filter of his now-departed conscience and intellect which kept it in check during his life. A perfect God, dwelling in the light of purity and perfection, cannot and will not tolerate the darkness of the human spirit in His presence, and thus the unredeemed will be consigned eternally to hell, out of His presence, with all grace of God forever removed from his soul.

This is why, as Jesus Himself said (Luke 18:19) there is no such thing as a truly “Good person” in God’s sight—because every human being, even if he is a decent person from a human perspective, has an evil side of darkness and selfishness at his core being that he may deny or sometimes never even be aware of.

* Human psychology would explain this as the *Ego* and *Superego* keeping the passions and drives of the *Id* in check, although the Scriptures attribute the human conscience to the grace of God.

So to reconcile humanity to God, a way had to be found for God not only to *forgive* mankind’s sins and imperfection that spring from his corrupted state—but also to *return* mankind to a state of perfection it knew before sin entered into the world, so God could dwell with Man in His presence with the core of human darkness done away with for good. That’s what Jesus meant by saying a man must be “**Born Again**.”

When we come to salvation in Christ, a down payment of this state of perfection is given us as the Spirit of God comes to dwell inside of *our* immortal spirit. Then, at the Resurrection, the full benefits of this divine experience will be realized, and we will become perfect reflections of God’s purity with both our physical and spiritual imperfections forever removed from us.

Now all “Christian” denominations—along with most non-religious people—would agree that if a person asked God to forgive his sins, God would forgive those sins if the man were sincere. Where most “Christian” religions diverge from each other lies in answering the second part of the question: that of how we return to a state of perfection allowing us to exist in the presence of a perfect God.

No amount of forgiveness alone could accomplish *that* task! No amount of good living could accomplish *that* task. No amount of obeying commandments could accomplish *that* task. *That* task had to be accomplished supernaturally through the power of God—and because it can only be accomplished through God’s own sovereign power, humanity cannot do it on its own by simply turning from sin and living a good life, or by obeying commandments of some sort.

This is where the counterfeit church parts company from the true church. The counterfeit church will always go on to make this process of perfection and reconciliation to God dependent on a person’s doing certain things that God will review at the Last Judgment and hopefully approve of. Things like: Being a “Good person,” obeying various biblical commandments, getting baptized using the right formula, knocking on doors to spread their church’s teachings, living strict lives of holiness, donating an inordinate amount of money to the church, avoiding “Worldly” things like smoking or drinking, submitting one’s personal life to the authority of the pastor or church elders, and so on.

Some of these things might be fine for us to do, but they can do nothing to eliminate the “Dark side” we’re born with. Thus, the difference between the true church and the counterfeit church is that the true Christian in the true church does “Good” things *because* he knows he has already been saved—not to *get* saved, *stay* saved, or to avoid hell, for the true church, in comparison to the counterfeit church, understands that we can never make ourselves acceptable to God by anything that we, ourselves, can do. As Paul says:

**What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.
For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.**
--Rom. 4: 1-5.

**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.
Not of works, lest any man should boast.**
--Eph. 2:8-9.

Now you may see why a way apart from simply doing “Good works” or being a “Good person” is required for mankind both to overcome the penalty of his sins, and also be made perfect in God’s sight. That way is by placing faith

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in Jesus Christ, who alone lived a life acceptable enough to meet God's standard of human perfection. Our salvation ultimately begins and ends by nothing more intricate than accepting Christ's gift of eternal life for us through trusting and relying on His sinless life and atonement on the cross as the price to gain forgiveness of our sins, and to have new life breathed into our corrupted spirit. This is why the "Good person" or the sincere follower of a non-Christian religion dies in his sins—he has not had that taint of sin and darkness removed from him because he never looked to Christ to accomplish that work in his spirit!

So in reality, God simultaneously made the standard for getting into heaven so high that no one could reach it—achieving an impossible state of sinless perfection and purity—yet at the same time made it so low that *everyone* could make it: Faith in Jesus Christ as savior and the means of our spirit being regenerated and "**Born Again!**"

This is why people who possess a *true* biblical understanding of salvation would say things like:

"I can never earn heaven through my own deeds—only through the blood of Christ."
"It's not what I've done that's saved me—it's what Jesus has done."

You see, salvation hinges on what you are consciously relying on to save you. I would therefore ask you to stop for a moment and determine if you are a saved individual—and if so, on what basis do you say that? Perhaps you've never stopped to think about that. Think about it now. *Why* are you saved?

In your mind, is it because you think you're a good person? Is it because you go to church, and live a moral life? Is it because you were baptized into a certain denomination?

While these are important things, reliance on those factors cannot impart eternal life to you, nor can they remove the core of darkness inside your immortal spirit, so let me help by reviewing the steps that one must take to come into a relationship with God.

1. *Acknowledge that you have committed sin, and repent, accepting Christ as savior and Lord.*

Acknowledging we have committed sin is simple enough. All of us can admit we've done some sort of wrongdoing in our past. But true recognition of sin is to understand that we haven't just done a few bad things here and there in our lives, but that we are living a life that constantly falls short of God's perfection. God has established what is right and wrong, and we, as sinners desiring salvation, must yield to God's views on the subject and admit we have broken His standards of righteousness either consciously or unconsciously. But this, unfortunately, is where some people fall short and never really get saved even if they embrace some measure of the Christian faith. This is because they reject some sins—like those dealing with sexuality—as really being wrong! This calls into question whether or not they have actually acknowledged and sought forgiveness for *all* their past sins! One must begin by accepting *God's* standard of what sin is, not man's, and *acknowledge* their sin even if they don't agree or don't understand why it's wrong when the Culture around them teaches that it's really right or natural!

Repentance means simply to change one's mind regarding the way he has been living his life in rebellion to the will of God, and adopt God's way of living. It does not mean, specifically, that we rely on our own willpower to stop all sin in our lives. It means that our change of attitude prompts us to change some of the things we have been doing that we know God doesn't approve of. Thus, repentance is a lifestyle, not an event!

An outgrowth of that new mindset is that we do begin the process of weeding out the sin in our lives with God's help. Some call this process *sanctification*. And keep in mind that your sins are never too bad to be forgiven. If that were true, then it would mean that sin is greater than the atoning power of Christ's blood, which is impossible. You see, sin is like an apple tree. Imagine a sign at the roots of the tree labeled *Eating the forbidden fruit*. This was Adam's sin. Now imagine that all the apples are labeled: *Murder, adultery, stealing, drug-use, hatred, homosexuality*, and so on.

Adam's sin was no worse than eating a piece of fruit, yet that one insignificant sin doomed humanity to hell, including those who didn't commit the same act! But all the bad fruits we have in *our* lives sprang from the root of that one sin. The atonement of Christ went back and overturned and atoned for that one act of Adam—and in doing that, all the fruits that sprang from his one act were atoned for as well. That's why no one is too bad to be saved—for the father of all sins was Adam's one act, and the price for that one sin has been paid. Thus, every sin that falls after Adam's has been paid for as well. This is why the penalty for every sin you commit—past, present, *and* future—has been paid for at the cross, and you will receive the benefits of that so long as you continue to abide in faith, accepting the gift of Christ's atonement.

Now when we come to Christ, there are some things we should cease doing immediately—or at least do the best we can to halt them—if we truly desire to follow Christ: Murder, obviously, or a sexual lifestyle incompatible with biblical guidelines. We should also destroy things like pornography we might own. Pornography is not harmless, and will keep

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you from coming into a full relationship with Christ. In fact, most of the time when you see the word *fornication* in the New Testament, it is the word *porneia* in the Greek--from which comes the word *pornography*. It's also necessary to trash any occult paraphernalia such as fortune-telling media, astrological charts, tarot cards, etc.

Other sins or weaknesses of the flesh--everything from lying, to behaving selfishly toward others--God often deals with gradually, helping us progressively become "better" persons as we grow in Him, although, no matter how good we get, we will never go to heaven just because we are "Good," nor will we ever reach a point where we walk in sinless perfection, for that will come at the Resurrection. However, our immortal spirit, having had life breathed into it by God's spirit when we accept Christ, will leave our bodies at our death and go to be with God. Some day, as Paul stated, it will be reunited with our body and then we will exist forever as perfect reflections of God's holiness.

Now while we're here on earth, some of us have a harder time resisting sin than others do. For men, temptation is usually in the sexual arena, which is why Paul spent much of his time warning about sexual activities incompatible with Christianity. The key is to do the best we can to resist sin--and when and if we yield to temptation, seek forgiveness and strength to be stronger next time. Only at the point where we willingly accept sin into our life ("I'm this way and I can't help it, so I'm not going to worry about it," or "God made us this way, so...") and begin denying it as sin do we stray into dangerous ground.

Accepting Christ, meanwhile, is really pretty simple. You do it by nothing more difficult than believing and relying that Jesus Christ has paid the price for your sins, and that because of His death on the cross, you are reconciled to God. The Bible says it this way:

**That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

--Rom. 10: 9-10.

"Believing" in Christ doesn't mean you just mentally think the whole idea makes sense. It means that you consciously trust in Christ and His death on the cross as the payment for your sins. It's as if a relative were to promise you that he was going to buy you a new car for your birthday--you would believe that were true, and consciously act in the belief that he would follow through on what he said. Salvation is like that--you take God at His word and then live your life as if you believe Him.

Let me suggest the following simple prayer in order to accept Jesus into your life:

"Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner in need of a savior. I believe that you paid the price for my sins on the cross, and that you rose from the dead to give me eternal life. I reject Satan and any involvement I have had with him, and I accept you as savior and Lord. I ask you to come into my heart, forgive my sins and deliver me from death. Show me the things I need to cut out of my life, and give me the strength to do it. Amen."

It's that simple. You simply have to believe it--not just say it--and want to have a relationship with God, then move forward from there.

2. Find a good evangelical or fundamentalist church, and get baptized.

Some denominations would disagree, but many Christians would tell you that baptism, while a commandment, is not a requirement for salvation. However, baptism is something God instructs us to do, and it is good for us to undergo it.

Baptism is a public statement of faith in Christ that confirms our being adopted into the Body of Christ--the Church as a whole--rather than a specific denomination. You may have been baptized as an infant, or years ago as a teenager. If you wonder if it is necessary to be baptized again, pray about it, since it certainly won't hurt anything. If you don't know of a Christian church, check the phone book. Denominations that teach an orthodox salvation theology include many Baptist churches, Evangelical Free Churches, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 4-Square churches, Assemblies of God, and Calvary Chapels among a number of other denominations. Avoid any church claiming it is the "true" church on earth, and the only one God recognizes. Such churches always wind up being cults of one sort or another.

If in doubt, ask whoever answers the phone whether their church believes in salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. Regardless of their logic, if the answer is anything *but* by grace alone, through faith alone, politely hang up without listening further. (The cults can offer a convincing explanation that someone not well versed in the Scriptures can easily be tricked by, and your salvation hinges on which doctrine of salvation you embrace.)

The “Unforgivable sin”

Having discussed how one becomes reconciled to God, we should now turn to one of the most tormenting things some people face: The thought that they have committed the “Unforgivable sin.” Concern that one has committed this sin is sadly common among Christians, and let me encourage you by pointing out that even the great Martin Luther, founder of the Protestant Reformation, was himself tormented by thoughts that he had committed this sin, freeing himself only after studying the promises of God in the Scriptures.

The sin in question is called the *Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit*. In the thousands of pages of the Bible, there are only a few portions of scripture in the New Testament that deal with this “Unforgivable sin.”

Wherefore I say unto you that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, either in this world, neither in the world to come. --Matthew 12:31-32 Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they (the Pharisees) said, He hath an unclean spirit. --Mark 3:28-30	And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. --Luke 12:10 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. --Hebrews 6:4-6 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he should pray for it. --1 John 5:16
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When you come right down to it, the Bible spends almost no time on this issue and does not even clearly express what it is or how one commits it except in superficial terms. If this sin were something that Christians should be concerned about--or if there were much of a chance that it could actually be committed--then the writers of the New Testament presumably would have gone into great depth and warned against behavior that could possibly lead to it. Since they do not, let us examine what they *do* say and see if we can determine what the sin is, how it is committed, and why it is unforgivable.

Just what is that sin, and how is it committed?

Our first section dealing with the sin is in Matthew, where Jesus says that anyone who, “**speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost**” shall not be forgiven. Clearly, then, the sin is committed by ‘**speaking**.’ So, let’s try to define what ‘**speaketh against**’ means. In the Greek, it means to speak slanderously or insultingly. This fact causes many to worry they have committed this sin, as it seems to set up an extremely low threshold to damn one for eternity. ‘**Speakest against**,’ depending on how strictly God wanted to interpret it, could be anything from a mild criticism levied against a (legitimate) Charismatic experience someone else was undergoing (even if done in ignorance), to cursing the Holy Spirit using every profane word one knew. Many people thus worry that somehow they might have said something “too bad” against the Holy Spirit for God to forgive.

Therefore, we must ask the question: Does the sin fall somewhere within those parameters?

Who or what is the object of this sin?

Obviously, it is the Holy Spirit who is the object of this sin. But first, what did Jesus mean by the term *Holy Spirit*? This may come as a shock to some, but at the point He speaks these words, *Jesus Christ is the only person on the face of the earth who knows the Holy Spirit is a Person!* Everyone else understands the term “**Holy Spirit**” in the classical Jewish sense--that it is “The Power (or inspiration) of God.” Thus, the blasphemy Jesus warns against is not a slanderous speaking against a *Person*, but rather the slanderous speaking against a *Power*! We see confirmation of this in the fact that the very incident that provokes the Pharisees is Jesus casting out demons. The Pharisees, who have already rejected Christ, although they knew Him to be the Messiah, see Him doing miracles before their eyes that they

The "Unforgivable Sin"

cannot duplicate, and so they go one step further by pronouncing the *power* under which Jesus works to be an "unclean spirit" or "Beelzebub" (Satan). It is thus the source of Jesus' *power*, and not specifically a Person, whom the Pharisees are consciously attacking.

We must next take a look at the word used for "against" in the text. Several Greek words are translated in the New Testament as "against," but the same word here is used elsewhere by Matthew and gives us a sense as to what Jesus means when He warns of saying a word "against" the Holy Spirit. Here are examples:

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council *against* him, how they might destroy him.

--Matt. 12:14.

And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided *against* itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided *against* itself shall not stand.

--Matt. 12:25.

He that is not with me is *against* me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

--Matt. 12:30.

The "against" is therefore an action of active opposition and not merely an offhand, disrespectful remark or criticism. Thus, it is publicly blaspheming the power of God *in conscious opposition, and with the specific intent of keeping others from responding to it*, that is the "Unforgivable sin." Blaspheming the Spirit is always accompanied by opposition to the Spirit and no desire for repentance!

This is why Jesus warns the Pharisees that they are in danger of blaspheming the Power of God by attributing a miracle of God's power to Satan, and opposing the work God is doing through it. So the sin is not merely verbally insulting a Personage of the Trinity. (Really, since the Holy Spirit is no more or less God than Jesus Christ is, someone who blasphemes the name of Jesus is no more or less guilty than someone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit in name. Since Jesus says one can blaspheme *Himself* and obtain forgiveness, then by extension, blaspheming the Holy Spirit personally is no worse. However, blaspheming the miracle power of God and attributing it directly to Satan in hope of keeping others from responding to it, when you *know* it is of God, is a different matter.)

Jesus' language also gives an interesting clue that may help to further define whether the sin can even be committed today when He says it will not be forgiven in "**this world**" or in "**the world to come**." First, "**world**" is a bad translation; "**age**" is more correct. Jesus is thus saying that neither in the present age nor in the Messianic Age is this sin forgivable. It is curious that He uses this language in this way, because it seems to suggest the possibility that the particular age one is living in can have a bearing on whether a sin can or cannot be forgiven. In point of fact, sin is sin and is either forgivable or not, regardless of what age one lives in.

While it's possible Jesus is merely using language to stress how serious this sin is, another possibility is that He is showing the sin can only be committed if Christ Himself is physically involved! In the only instance we see this sin occurring, the religious leaders have personally witnessed God in the flesh working miracles in front of them, and then pronounced those miracles to be done under the power of the devil. As Jesus said in John 15:24: **If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.**

No one else since the time of Christ has encountered these same exact circumstances the Pharisees found themselves in. Some may have seen a Christian do a miracle and believed the power came from the devil, but no one has seen the Son of God Himself stand before them and work a miracle on the level Jesus did, then pronounce Him and the miracle to be of the devil.

In the Messianic Age, Jesus will physically reign in Jerusalem, and in contrast to what many believe, there will absolutely be sin and sinners on the earth during that Age (Isaiah 65:20). It is entirely possible that there will still be those with such hard hearts that they will reject Christ as He rules upon the earth.

It may be this very hardness of heart that makes the sin unforgivable. Perhaps not so much because God *won't* forgive the sin, but more because He *can't*, for if you are blaspheming and rejecting the very power that seeks to draw you to repentance, obviously there is no way to repent and *be* forgiven!

This may be why so little is said about this sin in Scripture--because we are living in an age where it can't quite be committed in its fullest sense, so there is no great need to detail it. Thus, anything short of seeing Jesus Christ work a miracle, and then denying it and Him, is technically forgivable.

Even the section in the book of Hebrews that causes many people who’ve fallen back into sin after becoming Christians to think they are eternally lost isn’t clearly understood by most people. First, the book is written specifically to *Jewish* Christians, not Gentile Christians, and it must be understood only in that context. It was penned to encourage the faith of Jewish believers who were under constant harassment by the majority unbelieving Jews.

The Christian Jews faced many trials in this era, sometimes losing their property, position in the community, and even their lives. Under such pressure, some of these Jewish Christians turned back to non-Christian Judaism and animal sacrifice. It is these people chapter 6 speaks of. In the day it was written (around 65 AD), a Christian Jew who returned to Judaism was required to stand before the assembled synagogue, publicly renounce Christ, and then take a ritual baptism to return to good standing in the Jewish community. It is this sort of formal, extreme denial and renunciation of Christ that the writer says makes it “**impossible**” to repent since it exposes Christ to “**an open shame,**” and “**crucifies the son of God afresh,**” and treats “**the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.**”

Once again, we see the sin is something done in public, and not in private.

“Well, I cursed out the Holy Spirit once, and Jesus says that even ‘*speaking a word against the Holy Spirit*’ is enough to be lost! So how can God forgive that?”

He can forgive what you said for the reasons I’ve outlined. One may indeed have spoken, in a sense, blasphemously—but don’t make the mistake of taking the Scriptures too literally and misapplying them to your particular case. For instance, John 14:13-14 says that if we ask Jesus anything in His name, He will do it! As a young believer, I found that verse, believed it exactly as written, and prayed to win a million dollars in a contest. I can tell you I prayed that prayer with 100% absolute belief, sent in the form without even the slightest doubt of failure, and waited for the car to pull up with my check.

The car never showed up, and I presumed there must have been some mistake. I thus wrote off for a list of winners, still 100% certain I *had* to have won it!

Well, my name wasn’t on the list. My prayer wasn’t answered, because, although the Scripture verses *seem* clear, simple, and unequivocal, they’re not—and the true understanding of those verses is that if we are Spirit-led, doing the work of God, and have a firm foundation in the Scripture, then yes, we can ask what we will in the name of Christ and He will do those things He has promised in the Scripture to do, that God may be glorified.

Contests, and the like, don’t necessarily fall into that.

In the same way, simply saying something negative about the Holy Spirit, or even cursing the Holy Spirit is not blasphemy in the sense the Gospels are speaking of. While those are egregious sins, the deadly sort of blasphemy, as I’ve shown, takes the form of publicly giving glory to Satan for a miracle of God with the intent of keeping others from entering into the Kingdom.

“But I constantly think blasphemous thoughts about Christ or the Holy Spirit, so how can I be saved and have that happen?”

If this is happening to you, you’re not alone. I’ve counseled many people who’ve experienced this. First, ask yourself—do you want to think these thoughts about the Holy Spirit? Do you hate Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

If the answer is *no*, I can assure you these voices are from the devil, and their purpose is to torment and intimidate you into backing away from seeking the fullness of the Spirit in your life. I can’t say how you may have acquired this sort of harassment, but when I’ve asked people who’ve faced this, most all of them can remember a specific point when these thoughts started. Often this is after some sort of sexual sin or abuse, or some sort of occult dabbling.

The cure is fourfold:

1. Confess and repent from any ongoing sin you know God is dealing with you about.
2. Command in the name of Jesus any unclean spirits and the demonic Principality behind them that may be harassing you to go, and never return.
3. *Consciously* and *continuously* pray for God to release the fullness and anointing of the Holy Spirit in your life.
4. Fill your life with the things of God such as the Scriptures, Christian TV, radio, and music.

If necessary, seek further deliverance and counseling from a good Spirit-filled church. Frankly, you probably won’t get delivered from this sort of extreme spiritual harassment by getting prayed for at many old-line denominational churches. You need prayer by people who believe in the fullness of the Spirit in the church, with the faith to believe that they have the authority to break demonic bondage.

Other points about the “Unforgivable sin.”

It comes as a surprise to many, but David actually committed an unforgivable sin! Though it was under the Mosaic covenant, his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband could not be atoned for by any sacrifice--and the penalty, pure and simple, was death.

But what happened? God forgave David when he repented and cried out for mercy! This is why James says that: *Mercy triumphs over judgment.* (James 2:13)

Thus, there is no man whose sins God will refuse to forgive if he sincerely cries out for mercy.

“I’m still not convinced!”

If you’re still unconvinced, there isn’t much more I can say. But you can get an idea of how Christian sources throughout the ages have viewed this sin by their opinions that follow.

The *Didache*: *To judge* [true prophets of God] when they speak in the Spirit is the unpardonable sin.* The *Didache*, a 1st century Christian guidebook, is possibly the most valuable reference source outside the Bible regarding this sin. Written during the lifetimes of at least some of the apostles, it was widely accepted by the early church as teaching the doctrines held by the apostles. The *Didache* appears to take a position similar to what I’ve suggested: That the “Unforgivable sin” is some sort of public attack against something the Holy Spirit is doing. While it indicates that it was possible to commit the sin after the time of Christ, some theologians do extend the era this sin could be committed in to the lifetime of Christ *and* the apostles. In any event, the *Didache* is not infallible, but it does show that an acceptable understanding of the sin in the 1st century was an attack against a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit.

* Meaning to condemn and to oppose.

Origen: *[Mortal] sins committed after baptism.*

John Chrysostom: *Believing that Jesus was doing miracles by the Holy Spirit, but still attributing them to Satan.*

Athanasius: *Denial of Christ.*

St. Augustine: *The persevering hardness of an impenitent heart.*

Martin Luther: *Lack of faith.*

John Calvin: *An impenitent heart.*

Billy Graham: *Final rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.*

Pope John Paul II: *“‘Blasphemy’ does not properly consist in offending against the Holy Spirit in words; it consists rather in the refusal to accept the salvation which God offers to man through the Holy Spirit.”*

Perhaps the last point that could be made about the “Unforgivable sin” is that one who committed it would forever be removed from any influence of the Holy Spirit in his life, and would be fully open to becoming a tool of the devil. He thus would feel absolutely no guilt over his sins, would lose any desire to have Christ in his life, and would be prompted by the devil to oppose Christ and Christianity any way possible.

In other words, he would be just like the Pharisees. They hated Christ, wanted to kill Him, and would stop at nothing to destroy what He was doing, and when warned they were committing an unforgivable sin, didn’t believe it and didn’t care. If *you* care, then obviously you haven’t committed this sin. As someone once said, “The only people who worry about losing their salvation are people who are already saved!”

Remember, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not backsliding. Some of the greatest men of God have fallen away from Christ at one point or another and then recommitted themselves down the road.

Why people who doubt their salvation are their own worst enemy.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

--Rom. 8: 6-7.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

--Heb. 12:3.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit."

--Heb. 4:12.

Although somewhat on the metaphysical side, what follows will deal with the foundation behind why many people doubt their salvation. The basis for this work will be the verses cited above, for they are the key to understanding why some people simply cannot seem to break free of the belief they've committed the "Unforgivable sin."

To start with, we need to define the difference between what the "Spirit" and "Soul" of a man is.

In contemporary Christianity, theologians will usually define the "Spirit" of a man as his immortal essence--his "Ghost" if you will--while the soul is said to be made up of his "Mind, will, and emotions." This is generally as good an explanation as we can arrive at for two metaphysical subjects.

The spirit of a Christian is the place where the Holy Spirit dwells. It is the place in his thinking where the Holy Spirit manifests and empowers faith instead of doubt, obedience instead of rebellion, revelation instead of logic, love instead of hate, and peace instead of worry. It is a place the devil has no access to.

The soul is all attitudes, logic, feelings, and beliefs outside of that. It is the place empowered and influenced by both society and the devil himself. The soul, and its thoughts and feelings, is the heart of the struggle the Christian has against doubt and sin in his life.

Time after time when I deal with people questioning their salvation, there is one consistent factor they all have in common: It is next to impossible to convince them they haven't committed the "Unforgivable sin."

Some tell me they've E-mailed or contacted literally dozens of web sites or counselors seeking reassurance. Of these, a few--no matter what I say to them--come up with arguments against the points I make, some of which are almost brilliant in their logic.

These people have come seeking reassurance, but across the board they seem to bend over backwards to refuse the very assurance they've come for.

Why, you ask? The simple answer is that they come seeking assurance on an intellectual level, in a manner that will satisfy their rational mind.

There's only one problem with that: it's impossible.

The reason it's impossible is that the person is approaching the subject from their soulish realm, hoping to placate and convince the soul they're saved, because their soul has been doubting it.

The reason the soul doubts is because the soul is *not* truly redeemed at the cross, and since it is a part of man's body that will go down to the grave in death, a person operating out of that realm--the realm of human logic, doubt, and fear--cannot be convinced he is saved because *the soul itself is not saved!*

Thus, a person who has come to doubt his salvation typically cannot be intellectually persuaded of his salvation, nor will his "feelings" consistently give him reassurance of God's love for him. As Paul says, the "**Carnal mind**"--i.e., the soulish, human part of man's thinking and feelings--is against God's truth and cannot receive it. Again--not that it has a *hard time* accepting it; according to Paul, it *cannot* receive it!

It also cannot intellectually be satisfied.
It also cannot understand spiritual things.
It also cannot truly love God.
It also cannot truly serve God.

It cannot even *hear* from God, for all the things necessary for an individual to receive from God cannot come from the human part of man's thinking and emotions; they can only come from the spirit of a man which has been awakened by the *Holy Spirit!*

This is why the person who doubts his salvation often cannot be intellectually persuaded he hasn't committed the "Unforgivable sin"--he's trying to convince a carnal mind that is unsaved and cannot *be* saved, that it *is* saved!

He can't do that, and so that inability for the carnal mind to be convinced gives birth to a type of unbelief mentioned in the New Testament that is referred to by the Greek word *apeitheia*, which means a stubborn refusal to believe.

The “Unforgivable Sin”

And so our worried Christian stews in a sea of fear and doubt coming out of his soul because his unsaved soul knows it's not saved, and thus can't be persuaded that it *is* saved. By focusing on and remaining in a state of confusion coming out of the soul, the person's spirit—which *is* saved—thus becomes stifled in its growth, and the whole time this is going on all the person's doubts and fears are being reinforced and empowered by the devil, who has the ability to influence thoughts and emotions in the soulish realm. It thus becomes a vicious circle of doubt + demonic thoughts = fear, and a constant worry that the person must not be saved.

Let me give an example of someone stuck in this rut that doesn't realize the difference between his soul and his spirit. Assume someone who doubts his salvation sits down with me and we have a conversation about it.

Me: “So you think you've committed the ‘Unforgivable sin.’ What makes you think you did that?”

Worried person: “Well, the Bible says (this, this, and this) and I think I...”

Me: “Well—deep down in your spirit, do you think you hate God and hate Jesus?”

Worried person: “Well, no, I think I *love* Jesus, but...”

Everything that falls into the “but” comes from the soul and its surface thoughts—which are the devil's playground—rather than the man's spirit. As Paul says: **For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?** (1 Cor. 2:11)

Only what the person knows and feels deep down inside of him, away from his surface thoughts and feelings, is what the ultimate truth is. Thus, when he tells me that deep down he wants Jesus and may even love Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but still he thinks he's committed the “Unforgivable sin,” I know he can't possibly have done so.

If he answered that he *hated* Christ and the Holy Spirit, then I might well agree he had committed this sin.

This is why we counselors tell them that if they're worried about it, they *can't* have done it—for if they *had* done it, both spirit and soul would reject Christ and the person would feel no remorse, but instead an absolute intellectual satisfaction with their actions. Thus, they wouldn't be trying to find a way to believe they *hadn't* committed the sin—they simply would be content with their decision!

Remember the Pharisees who rejected Christ and were specifically told they had committed the “Unforgivable sin.” There was no fear in them. No worry. No doubt. They were absolutely unconcerned about what they were doing, didn't realize it was wrong; and that very inability to see the need for repentance removed them from any chance of *obtaining* forgiveness for their sins! This is completely the opposite of what a Christian goes through when he worries that he's committed the “Unforgivable sin.”

“So how does one overcome this bondage?”

The answer is first to realize when one is experiencing demon-empowered soulish thoughts, and to then reject them. The devil is a liar, and if he's telling someone they're unsaved—they obviously *are* saved! So the next time a wave of doubt washes over you, that blasphemous thought against the Holy Spirit arises in your head, etc.—just sit back, empty your mind of those surface thoughts, then concentrate and focus in on that part of your thinking that knows it wants God.

That's your spirit.

Once you've banished those thoughts for a moment, just give thanks to God for His grace and the atonement of Christ for your sins. Just stay focused on that inner part of yourself that's deep down and doesn't think or want those thoughts, and take comfort in the fact that's the part of you that *is* saved, and *does* have eternal life.

“Does this mean we have to walk around in continual schizophrenia?”

No. God's purpose is for man's spirit to grow to the point where, instead of man's actions being directed by his soul, his spirit directs his actions, and the soul either falls in line or else assists to the degree it can in helping the Christian follow God's will for him. The key to this is growing in one's spirit, by being fed with the things of God.

Start with listening to some good Christian music or teaching. I recommend a tape series by Joyce Meyer called *Fickle Feelings*, for one.

When you're in church, don't sit there daydreaming because you're bored (as I'm certain you do), but close your eyes, empty your mind, stop thinking, and let your spirit get fed by what's being preached!

You *will* start to see changes!

How to overcome being mad at God

One of the greatest hindrances to many Christians' walk is some sort of anger or resentment against God. There are Christians in church who are literally furious at God, while there are others who can't or won't trust God because of some disappointment they endured at a point in their past walk with Christ.

Tragically, many of those people have settled into that mindset and simply accepted their attitude as a part of their lives, and their maturity in Christ was stifled at that point. Invariably, people with some sort of bitterness at God either remain consciously bitter, or else reach a state of hardness of heart where the feeling may no longer be obvious but the bad fruit of it remains in his life.

The problem for both groups is overcoming the attitudes left in the wake of whatever caused them. Yet while we may understand that, what we often don't understand is that the attitudes are only a fruit of human feelings and emotions that are tied in with whatever trauma caused the Christian to stumble in his walk.

To overcome this bondage, the first step is to...

Determine what caused the problem.

When I encounter people with an issue of bitterness against God, most of the time it was not a prolonged series of events, but usually one single incident that caused it. That, or something was the last straw that resulted in their blaming God either for allowing negative things to happen, or for not doing something that the person really wanted or expected Him to do.

So the first thing I do with someone who needs counseling in this area is to have him answer the following questions:

"I became unhappy or disillusioned with God in my past because _____"
"I'm unhappy now with God because _____"

I've known people to get mad at God for everything from not winning the Lottery, to losing a loved one. But guess what? Neither of those two extremes is any more valid an excuse than the other. There is no acceptable excuse to be angry with God for anything. However, we're human, and humans are foolish creatures, and so to get out of the prison that we cast ourselves into, we need to see precisely what the bars are made of.

I get a wide range of answers, and here are just a few:

"I've been a faithful giver and tither, yet I can't get my head above this mountain of debt no matter how much I give or pray, so what's the deal?"
"I'm almost forty, and still single. How come God won't bring someone into my life? I notice the better-looking people in my church are all married. Why does He let *them* get married, and not me?!"
"How can a loving God let such-and-such happen?"
"I really stood in faith for months, and I was sure I'd heard from God on such-and-such, but it never happened and now look at the circumstances I'm in!"
"I was really counting on that job, and it should have been mine, but I may as well have prayed to the wind for all the good praying to *God* did!"
"You can't imagine the physical pain I go through each day. Why won't God heal *me* when He heals others?"

If we look at the various statements like this, we see they all boil down to one of two factors:

1. God did not prevent something negative from happening.
2. God did not do something positive for the person.

Sooner or later, God is going to disappoint every one of His children at some time, for some reason. This happened with the sister of Lazarus in the Gospels: Jesus didn't hurry back from wherever He was to heal her brother before he died; and when He finally *did* arrive, Mary stayed in the house, hurt and disappointed.

We too will eventually face some sort of disappointment in our lives, and then we must make a decision on how we will go on from that point. Either we will grow from the experience and develop our faith and trust in God, despite what's happened, or we will give in to disappointment and watch our faith weaken in response.

When we fall prey to disappointment with God, resentment sets in, drawing us away from Him. Spiritual growth often halts at that point and does not resume until the issue is resolved. In some cases, this can be for the rest of a person's life, so the sooner the issue can be resolved, the sooner the person can move on. The longer it takes, the harder it is to recover from, and the more control of one's thoughts and emotions the devil gains influence over. He is then able, through these distorted thoughts and feelings, to mold the person into a perversion of what he would be had he continued on in God.

Someone stuck in a mindset of prolonged bitterness toward God ceases to exude fruit of the Spirit (**love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance**) and begins instead to manifest fruits of the flesh (**adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings**) in their place as his faith deteriorates. Just how much he exudes these negative traits can vary from a little, to a complete rejection of Christ in cases where a person has so little faith left that he turns back to a non-Christian lifestyle because he didn't get what he expected out of Christianity. It is thus a *faith* crisis that must be dealt with, and there are three ways of resolving it:

1. The person mopes for a while, and then forgets about the problem. This usually only occurs when the issue has been some light disappointment of no great substance. After a sufficient amount of time, the hurt feelings wear off and the person settles back into whatever walk he had before (typically an immature one).
2. The person comes to an intellectual understanding of his deception, and repents from his anger at God. This is comparatively rare. Again, this is usually an option when the problem hasn't been all that serious to start with.
3. God has to enable the person to repent, often by healing him. More often, when someone is stuck in a mindset of anger toward God, the only way for him to move on is for God to intervene and enable him to repent, healing the breach, because the ability to repent ultimately comes from God to start with (2 Tim. 2:25).

In all cases, a person's thinking must change, for he must intellectually recognize his resentment toward God is unwarranted. To do this, he must...

Understand the correct theological viewpoint with respect to God's sovereignty.

The biggest mistake in our thinking, which causes all of our problems at one time or another, is to presume that since "God is in control," we have a right to expect Him to keep bad things from happening in our lives. We think this because we, ourselves, would keep bad things from happening to our own friends and family; and we assume that since we're children of God, we should expect Him to do no less for *us*!

The problem is, the Scripture does not fully agree with this notion; it indicates that the bad things that will happen in our lives will not destroy us, and will be used by God to develop strength and character. (1 Pet. 1:7 and 4:13 also suggest that there is an eternal reward for the trials we go through in life, over and apart from rewards gained by serving God in the Gospel.)

Only in the Resurrection will all bad things be wiped out, leaving us nothing to worry about. Until then, we live in the same cursed world that the unsaved person does, and good and bad happens to both of us. The difference is, there is little or nothing God works through in the life of the unsaved person's circumstances for *his* ultimate good.

Not so with us. God has a plan for those who are saved, and the more we seek Him, and the more we live within the principles He has established, the more completely we will be led into what He has for us, and become the person we have the potential to be. It is the disappointments in life and our responses to them that either make us stronger or weaker in our faith, and either help us more conform to the mold God has for our lives and character, or beat us out of shape and mutate us into what we should not be.

Thus, our understanding of God's sovereignty in our lives should be seen primarily as His being aware of the bad things that will happen to us, and that He will bring some good out of them if we do not fall by the wayside or allow our faith to be choked off by circumstances and worries.

The sinner has none of this going for him—he is a prisoner of circumstance, and circumstance makes him bitter or better based on his own human response to what he goes through.

Once a Christian has embraced a correct understanding of God's sovereignty, he needs to realize...

God is good.

You'd think this is obvious, but hand-in-hand with anger at God comes a conscious or unconscious denial that He is good, because part of a person's bitterness toward God is in thinking God isn't really good because of the circumstances the individual is in.

Job faced something like this during his own trials. Though he started out well, giving praise to God in his circumstances, his prolonged suffering finally broke him, and actually made him angry at God for his treatment, to the point God had to call him to account for his attitude:

... Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? (Job 40:8) I.e., *Will you make Me out to be evil in order to make yourself out to be good?*

We're no different. And since *the only way to repent from a feeling is by substituting a belief in its place*, I want someone I counsel to come to understand that no matter how bad things are, God is good, and God loves him despite His not intervening. In fact, God is so good that Jesus said...

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.
--Luke 6:35.

God is even good to those who are ungrateful, and to those who are wicked! They may not perceive His goodness any more than we might when things are going bad, but God is good to all of us. So, whatever we may be going through, we need to consciously keep in mind that God is still absolutely good to us! Despite that goodness, however...

God is not "Obligated" to do any specific thing in someone's life.

Whatever you may have been taught, God is not under an absolute obligation to give you a hundredfold return on the money you sent a Televangelist, pay your bills, heal your diseases, and so on. Now there are indeed times God supernaturally intervenes in such ways, but these are acts of grace, not acts of obligation. While the Scripture does talk about God's blessing, and illustrates the principles of things like sowing and reaping, a mistake many people make is in presuming these principles are a means of indebting God to His Word, obligating God to do something based on a person's actions or prayers. What happens at this point is that one's incorrect thinking may actually place him in a position where he violates a spiritual principle, preventing him from otherwise receiving from God!

You see, the attitude that God is *required* to do something because the Christian himself has undertaken an action he believes entitles him to God's response is a philosophy of Works. As Paul states in Romans:

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God."
--Rom. 4:2.

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace...
--Rom. 11:6.

Although Paul is talking about justification with God, he is also illustrating a principle that everything God does for us He does through grace--that is, because of His own mercy, and not because we have done anything to "earn" it.

That's the problem some people encounter in receiving from God: Occasionally, they fall into the trap of adopting an attitude, conscious or otherwise, that they have done something that obligates God to do something in response. When this happens, they automatically bring themselves under a curse and place themselves outside a position to be blessed!

The truth is, the principles of blessing merely reveal what places someone in a position to receive grace in a given area of his life. The abundance that may follow is in accord with God's plan for that person and is meant to help develop that person spiritually, and to place him in a position where he can help others. People who fail to understand this often set themselves up for disappointment, and conclude God somehow lied, or that the Scripture doesn't work simply because they were tricked into a wrong attitude or into hoping for something that was outside God's will for them.

Apart from that...

God works through people more than He does through miracles.

There is a parable about Lazarus, a beggar who sat outside the house of a rich man. His mortal life was utterly miserable, but in death he received a great reward. The rich man, who appears never to have concerned himself with the beggar outside his dwelling, died and went to hell.

If Lazarus were like most of us, he'd have been mad at God for not meeting his needs. But the truth is, God has primarily called his *people* to help each other. We are His eyes, ears, and hands in this world. The rich man, being a Jew knew the Law, knew he was duty-bound to help the poor, but he chose not to do that. Lazarus may have paid the price in life, but in eternity all accounts were made right. That doesn't mean God somehow wasn't being fair with

Lazarus by not meeting his needs by some way other than a rich man who was ignoring his obligation. All of us have our part to do in this world, and if we fail to do our part to help someone else, we're the ones who aren't being good, because God has called us to show His goodness to others as His ambassadors!

Having outlined some general principles about God's sovereignty and how our expectations of His work in our lives are often unreasonable, it now falls on us to deal with the practical means of how we break the cycle of bitterness we may be caught up in.

The first thing I counsel people to do is to pray, confessing their sin of anger towards God, and asking for His help to repent from that and get free.

Secondly, I try to get them to understand the bitterness they may feel is being used by the devil as a wedge between they and God. One of the things demons are capable of doing is amplifying negative thoughts and emotions. I liken it to turning the power up with a dimmer switch and a light bulb. The more power you direct to the bulb, the brighter it shines. Demons similarly amplify feelings of resentment, and specific prayer has to be made against that on a constant basis.

How do you do that? Very simple: When a thought comes that brings about some "feeling" of bitterness toward God for something, you immediately stop, take a breath, and pray something along the lines of...

"Father God, I thank you that thought and that feeling is a lie. I reject the spirit behind it, and ask You to smite it in the name of Jesus, and give me the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in its place. I thank You, no matter what I've gone through or what I am going through, You're going to bring good out of it, and I'm going to get through it in victory!"

You may have to pray that all day long, but if so, keep doing it! Don't stop, don't get tired, and don't think it's not working. Do it every time that happens, and what you'll find is that the thoughts or feelings will begin to lessen in intensity until you have the mental strength to ignore them.

Third, I encourage the person to absolutely deal with any overt sin issues in their lives. Overt sin allows demonic influence to affect us, and when we're trying to close them out we need to shut the door of sin as one step in that process.

Most importantly of all, you *must* be in the Scriptures! You need to read the Bible on a daily basis. Failing that, you at least need to go to the Christian bookstore, the local swap meet, or whatever, to get a recording of the New Testament. If you have to, keep a player by your bed, and in the morning when you wake up, listen for 15 minutes or so before you get up. Reading and listening to the Scriptures will correct your thoughts and give you the mental and physical ability to resist the thoughts and feelings sent by the devil to keep you in a state of anger toward God.

Last of all, I always encourage anyone who's been troubled by emotional trauma to watch Joyce Meyer on TV or get her tape sets. God uses her ministry to aid people with various emotional issues, and since emotions are a critical part of this issue, her ministry is invaluable for those needing emotional or mental healing.

Having done all this, I can't tell you how long it will take to absolutely get free. **It's possible you may not even get free! This is because some—not all!—illnesses or circumstances in our lives can come about because of sin we committed, (John 5:14), and if God removed them we would sin again and reap an even worse fate!** Ironically, they can remain for our own good!

The final factor in all of this is God's timing. I know people who've struggled with various issues for years, wishing they could overcome but being unable to—then one day, they wake up free! I can't tell you why that is; I can only affirm that there are times when God has a specific time to move in one's life, and that's the way it is. Until then, we just have to keep on, keeping on.

Interestingly, I've noticed that it's in what we might consider to be the "worst" periods of our lives that God often can do the most through us if we tough it out and keep pressing forward despite the bad circumstances. Most of Paul's epistles, for instance, were written not in the most exciting times of his ministry when he was working miracles without facing a great deal of opposition—but while he was in jail! Even this paraphrase and the articles herein that predated it, which have helped a great many people, did not arise from a time when my walk was strongest and the power and fellowship with God was most visible—every page you see was written during a prolonged period of trial where my outward circumstances ranged anywhere from bad, to worse, to hopeless.

Do I like that? No. But like you, I have to press forward and do what God has given me a gift to do, and let Him worry about everything else.

Matthew

No one knows when the Gospel of Matthew was written, though it may have been around 50-60 AD in Antioch. It was almost certainly written first in Aramaic, and then later translated into Greek. This early “Hebrew Matthew” was probably the foundation for Mark’s subsequent Gospel.

Note: If you did not read the article about Pharisees before jumping into Matthew, note that references to *Shammai* or the *Shammaiites* are speaking of the chief Pharisee leader of Jesus’ time and those who followed his legalistic teachings. The Pharisees who embraced his teachings were the main opponents of Jesus in the Gospels.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

1 The book of the generation¹ of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;
3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar²; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;
4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;
5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;
6 And Jesse begat David³ the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;
7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;
8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;
9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;
10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;
11 And Josias begat Jechonias⁴ and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:
12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;
13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;
14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;
15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;
16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus⁵ who is called Christ⁶.
17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

1 **T**his is a record of the ancestry of Jesus the Messiah, descendant of David, and descendant of Abraham.
2 Abraham [Father of a Multitude] fathered Isaac [Laughter]; and Isaac fathered Jacob [Heel-catcher or Supplanter]; and Jacob fathered Judah [He Shall be Praised] and his brethren;
3 And Judah fathered Perez [A Breach] and Zara [Rising] of Thamar [Date Palm]; and Perez fathered Esrom [Enclosed]; and Esrom fathered Aram [High];
4 And Aram fathered Aminadab [One of the Prince’s People]; and Aminadab fathered Naasson [Enchanter]; and Naasson fathered Salmon [A Garment];
5 And Salmon fathered Boaz [In Him is Strength] of Rahab [Wide]; and Boaz fathered Obed [Serving] of Ruth [Friend]; and Obed fathered Jesse [Wealthy];
6 And Jesse fathered David [Beloved] the king; and David the king fathered Solomon [Peaceful] of bat Sheba [Daughter of the Oath], who had been the wife of Urias;
7 And Solomon fathered Roboam [Enlarger of the People]; and Roboam fathered Abijah [My Father is Yah]; and Abijah fathered Asa [Doctor];
8 And Asa fathered Josaphat [Whom Yahweh Judges]; and Josaphat fathered Joram [Whom Yahweh Has Exalted]; and Joram fathered Ozias [Strength of Yahweh];
9 And Ozias fathered Joatham [Yahweh is Upright]; and Joatham fathered Achaz [Possessor]; and Achaz fathered Hezekiah [The Might of Yahweh];
10 And Hezekiah fathered Manasses [Forgetting]; and Manasses fathered Amon [Builder]; and Amon fathered Josias [Whom Yahweh Heals];
11 And Josias fathered Jechonias [Whom Yahweh Establishes] and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:
12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias fathered Salathiel [I Have Asked of God]; and Salathiel fathered Zorobabel [Born in Babylon];
13 And Zorobabel fathered Abiud [Father of Praise]; and Abiud fathered Eliakim [God Rising]; and Eliakim fathered Azor [Helper];
14 And Azor fathered Zadoc [Just]; and Zadoc fathered Achim [The Lord Will Establish]; and Achim fathered Eliud [God His Praise];

David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.
 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.⁷
 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD⁸ appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS⁹: for he shall save his people from their sins.
 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
 23 Behold, a virgin¹⁰ shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.
 24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:
 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

15 And Eliud fathered Eleazar [Help of God]; and Eleazar fathered Matthan [Gift]; and Matthan fathered Jacob [Heel-catcher or Supplanter];
 16 And Jacob fathered Joseph [Let Him Add], the husband of Miriam [Rebel], of whom was born Jesus [Yahweh is Salvation] who is called Christ--the Anointed One.
 17 So there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the forced exodus to Babylon, and fourteen generations from that to the birth of the Messiah.
 18 Now the circumstances of Jesus Christ's birth were these: While his mother Miriam was engaged to Joseph--before they were married and living together--she, though a virgin, was found to be pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.
 19 Her fiancé Joseph, a just man [who was unwilling to put her through the public humiliation of the *Sotah* ceremony for alleged adulteresses], considered divorcing her quietly.
 20 But while he was debating what to do about these things, the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream, and said: Joseph, descendant of David--don't hesitate to go through with this marriage to Miriam and take her as your wife, for her unborn child was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 21 She will give birth to a son whom you will name Yeshua [--or *Jesus* in the Greek tongue, which means 'God is Salvation'--] because he will save his people from their sins.
 22 This all happened so that a prophecy spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah could come to pass:
 23 *Behold, a young [virgin] girl shall become pregnant, and give birth to a son that shall be called Emmanuel*, which means 'God is in our midst.'
 24 Awakening, Joseph heeded the angel's words, and took Miriam as his wife.
 25 But he did not sleep with Miriam at any time during the pregnancy, and finally a boy child was born whom Joseph named Yeshua [Jesus].

1. This is believed to be the genealogy of Joseph, whereas Luke supposedly records Mary's. The genealogy is intentionally incomplete to equal 42 generations (and this by counting some people twice). There is precedence for doing this in the Old Testament (Ezra's genealogy is abbreviated, for instance), but why Matthew does this is a mystery we will never have a certain answer for. He may be omitting insignificant ancestors. The numeric value of David's name is 14, and this may play into it. There were 14 Zadokite High Priests from the time of the Tent Tabernacle to the erection of Solomon's Temple, another possible inspiration for Matthew's odd manipulation of the genealogy.
2. One of only four women mentioned in the genealogies of Jesus, whose name means "Date Palm." Her story is in Genesis 38.
3. All Jewish kings had both a birth name and a coronation name(s). Solomon, for instance, was also called Jedidiah and Lemuel. It's possible that David's birth name was Elhanan as suggested in 2 Sam. 21:19. Note the reference there to Elhanan's being the son of Jair, or that it was the "brother" of Goliath who was slain, is spurious in the opinion of some scholars.
4. Some theologians believe, based on a prophecy in Jeremiah 22:30 to Jechonias/Jehoiachin, that the Solomonic line became disqualified from producing an heir to the throne of Israel despite a prophecy in 2 Sam. 7:13, which speaks of Solomon's throne being perpetuated forever. Through this, the birthright shifted to Nathan's line, and Luke later traces that line from Nathan to Mary with the Solomonic birthright being restored when Joseph weds Mary and grants Jesus the rights to both genealogies. Against this is the fact that Philo identifies Jechonias with Neri, mentioned in Luke's genealogy (Luke 3:27), but this is hardly conclusive.
5. The Hebrew birth name of Jesus was *Yeshua*, the Hebrew version of *Joshua*, which means *God is salvation*. In Galilee, the "a" was not pronounced, and so His followers may have known him as *Yeshu*. The later Greek/Latin/English transliteration to *Jesus* may, by divine intent, be His coronation name, and so it may literally be true that it is to *Jesus* that every knee shall bow.
6. Meaning "anointed."
7. There is far more to this than is apparent in this one sentence. Mary's being pregnant when already betrothed was a strangling offense (assuming she was between 12 and 12 1/2), or a stoning offense. And if she were from a priestly family, as some believe, the penalty would have been death by a torch being thrust down her throat. While it is debatable how often stoning took place under the Roman occupation, Mary, whose Hebrew name was Miriam (Rebel), otherwise would have had to undergo the Jewish *Sotah* ceremony (see Numbers 5) to prove she had not committed adultery. Although reasonably straightforward in the Torah, by the time of Christ it had grown into a humiliating process where the woman was partially stripped and dragged around the grounds of the Temple in an effort to wear her down and cause her to confess her sin, the apparent belief being that she was guilty until proven innocent. During this ceremony, the women of Jerusalem were required to come to the Temple to observe the spectacle as a deterrent to adultery. It is these things that are on Joseph's mind as he debates how to handle the situation.
8. Some denominations (Jehovah's Witnesses, for example), deny the Deity of Christ, and teach that He is an exalted angel who in the Old Testament appeared as the Angel of the Lord. While most Christians agree that Jesus did appear at times as the Angel of the Lord, this verse quickly shows a flaw in the view that Jesus was nothing more than an angelic being since the Angel of the

Lord appears when Christ is already within the body of Mary, showing that there are at least two separate beings who were called by this title: Gabriel—a true angel—and the pre-incarnate Christ.

9. As noted, the angel probably would have used the name *Yeshua*, rather than the Greek *Iesous* (*Jesus*), but this is not a certainty.

10. Quoted from the Septuagint, the popular Greek version of the Old Testament of the time. As the oldest texts we have are from later centuries, it is impossible to verify that copies in Matthew's time used the Greek word *parthenos*, which usually, but not always, refers to a virgin. The Hebrew word *almah* was employed in the Hebrew text, meaning either a virgin or a young girl/woman. The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 clearly was not prophesying a virgin birth in its direct context to king Ahaz, but this suggests the possible divine inspiration behind the Septuagint translation (72 scribes, working independently, supposedly produced identical manuscripts of at least the Pentateuch, though there is a question as to the accuracy of the source claiming this); or that ancient scribes also considered this to be a Messianic prophecy and chose to translate it in a metaphysical manner.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 2

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men¹ from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and

MATTHEW CHAPTER 2

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the latter days of Herod the Great, some sages came to Jerusalem from the east.

2 They asked: Where is he who is born the King of the Jews? [In Babylon,] we saw his star arise, proclaiming his birth, and are come to pay homage to him.

3 When Herod the Great heard about this, he became nervous [for his throne], and all Jerusalem trembled with him.

4 So when Herod summoned all the chief priests and Torah teachers among the people and demanded to know where the Messiah would be born,

5 They told him: Bethlehem in Judea, for the prophet Micah wrote:

6 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

7 Then Herod [--concerned about word of this child's existence spreading--] secretly called the visiting sages and asked exactly when they had first seen the star.

8 [When they answered that it was around a year previously,] he then sent them to Bethlehem, saying: Search diligently for this young child, and let me know when and where you find him so I may go pay homage to him as well.

9 At Herod's word they departed--and the star they had seen in the east moved before them, and led them to a house [in Bethlehem] where the young child was. And there it halted above the house.

10 At seeing the star do this, the sages greatly rejoiced.

11 The men came into the house and found the infant with his mother Miriam. Then they fell prostrate, reverencing him. Next, they opened their packs and presented the family with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 As they slept, God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they returned to their country by a different route.

13 After they left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in another dream, and told him: Get up, and flee with the young child and his mother to Egypt, and stay there until I bring word for you to return, for Herod will try to find the babe and slay him.

14 As soon as the dream was over, Joseph awakened and wasted no time in leading his family out of Bethlehem, and they left that same night, fleeing westward to Egypt.

15 They were there until Herod died soon after, so that a word of the Lord through Hosea the prophet could be fulfilled that said: **Out of Egypt have I called my son.**

16 After Herod realized that the sages had gotten the

in all the coasts² thereof, from two years old and under³, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.⁴

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither:⁵ notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth⁶: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

better of him, he was furious, and sent his men out to slay all the male children in and around Bethlehem who were around [one year old or younger, for the sages said it was around a year earlier that they had seen the star].

17 This was to fulfill a prophecy by Jeremiah the prophet:

18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

19 Herod died soon after this, and in Egypt an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in another dream,

20 Saying: Get up, and take the baby and his mother back to Israel, for the ones who wanted him dead are now dead themselves.

21 So Joseph arose, gathered up the young child and his mother, and they returned to the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Herod's son Archelaus had taken the throne of Judea [--and was already showing himself to be a despot like his father--] he was afraid to go back. On top of that, he had a dream from God not to go back as well, and so he turned aside to the region of Galilee.

23 Thus, Joseph came to settle in a hamlet called Nazareth, fulfilling what was said by the prophets: *He shall be called a Nazarene.*

1. Matthew probably jumps about a year ahead in time, for the Wisemen did not arrive until long after the child was born. It was around a 10-day journey from the border of Babylonia to Israel, so they apparently delayed in making their journey.

The identity and number of the Wisemen is debatable. The word *magi* may be understood in a variety of ways, from astrologers, to magicians, to Jewish sages, to even court officials. The most reasonable understanding would be that they were sages aware of a coming Messiah, and that the sign of a star in the heavens was viewed as a fulfillment of a prophecy in Numbers 24.

2. Should be translated as: "**Region**."

3. It was a custom to reckon the age of a child from conception, and at birth it was already considered to be one year old.* (In later periods, children could be considered to pass their first year upon the arrival of *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year in September.) Thus, someone two years old by our reckoning would only have been one year old by *Jewish* reckoning. Herod probably ordered that all boys younger than toddlers be slain.

* This custom even carried over to some degree into Western Christianity. In Catholicism, for instance, the age of a potential godparent is still reckoned under the assumption that a child is considered to be a year old at birth. Thus, a godparent's minimum age is 16 through that formula, but only 15 in actual chronological age.

4. An odd statement. Its original context referred to Jews taken captive by the Assyrians. Rachel's tomb is near Bethlehem, and this may figure into the verse.

5. Joseph had good reason to fear, for while Archelaus held a banquet for all of Jerusalem on the death of Herod as a gesture of goodwill, he slew 3000 Jews during the Passover of 4 BC (though this date may be off by a couple of years).

6. Skeptics point out that there is no such prophecy in the Old Testament. However, since Matthew states that this was "**spoken**" of, he may be citing an ancient oral tradition that is now lost. 2 Chron. 30:19 may indicate a lost book of the Bible called the *Sayings of the Seers* (or the *Book of Hozai*), which may be the genesis of this claim by Matthew. Whether the tradition cited held that the Messiah would literally come from Nazareth (which, as a city, is not recorded in any literature until long after the death of Christ, though archeological evidence from a 1st century synagogue in Caesarea mentions the town by name in connection with a family of priests), or whether this refers, in a philosophical sense, to the *Messiah ben Joseph*, or "Suffering Messiah," who was expected to be mocked and rejected, we cannot know for sure. For those unaware, there was a belief in some streams of Judaism that at least two Messiahs were coming: the *Messiah ben David*, the conquering Messiah everyone wanted; and the *Messiah ben Joseph*, a suffering Messiah who would precede the conquering Messiah, and be slain. One description of a dying Messiah can be found in the apocryphal book of 4th Ezra, chapter 7, written 350 years before Christ, which states that God's Son, the Messiah, would die, and the earth returned to a state of oblivion as in its beginning.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 3

1 In those days came John the Baptist¹, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2 And saying, Repent² ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 3

1 In the days when Jesus had grown to adulthood but still lived in Nazareth, John [--or *Yochannon* in the Hebrew tongue--] the Baptizer started his ministry in the Judean wilderness,

2 Saying: Repent, all of you, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!

3 Now John was the one spoken of by the prophet Isaiah

4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts³ and wild honey.
 5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,
 6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.⁴
 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees⁵ and Sadducees⁶ come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:
 9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones⁷ to raise up children unto Abraham.
 10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:⁸
 12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.
 13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.
 14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?
 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.⁹
 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:
 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

when he wrote: **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."**

4 This same John [--as had Elijah in olden times--] dressed in a garment of camel's hair with a leather girdle about his loins, and he ate [carob beans] and wild honey.
 5 Everyone in Jerusalem, Judea, and in the region along the Jordan came,
 6 And were baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins.
 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees, [the religious leaders who controlled the synagogues,] and Sadducees, [the priests who controlled the great Temple,] come to his baptism, John railed against them, saying: You bunch of snakes! Who warned *you* to repent and escape God's coming wrath?!
 8 [Change your attitudes and the way that you act if you've come to repent!]
 9 Don't think to yourselves, *We're Abraham's descendants [so we have nothing to fear]!* I tell you God can take these rocks you see [--the ones erected by Joshua when the Israelites entered the Promised Land--] and turn *them* into children of Abraham if He wants to!
 10 Be warned that God's ax is ready to cut down the trees that bear no good fruit, therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire!
 11 I am indeed baptizing you with mere water for repentance, but someone is coming after me--one whose sandals I am not even worthy to carry [as a slave would]-- who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, and fire!
 12 His fan is in his hand, ready to fan the harvest to separate the wheat and gather it into his barn, but the chaff [--John said about the Pharisees and Sadducees--] he will burn with a fire that will never go out!
 13 Eventually, Jesus also came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.
 14 But John tried to stop him, saying: I need you to baptize me, and yet you come to ask me to baptize *you*?
 15 Jesus answered: Allow it now, for it's right for us to fulfill all righteousness in this way. So John baptized him.
 16 When Jesus came up from the water, John had a vision of the heavens opening up and instantly the Spirit of God descending and resting upon Jesus like a dove.
 17 And a voice from heaven said: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased!

1. Josephus on John the Baptist.

Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away of some sins, but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, who feared, lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise, thought it best by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him. (Ant. 18 5.2)

Note: In the Middle East, there are still thousands of non-Christian followers of John the Baptist called *Mandaeans*, with their own unique baptismal and religious practices. The Mandaeans supposedly invented the handshake as a form of greeting.

2. The word *metanoeo*--one of the most important words in the New Testament--together with its brother word *metanoia*, shows the basis of true repentance that leads to salvation. The word means to come to a moral understanding that one's sin is wrong in

God's eyes, and through that to change one's behavior away from sin and toward righteousness. Its cousin word *metamellosai* means to be sorry for one's sins primarily because of the circumstances a person now finds himself in as a result of them. This false, superficial repentance is the sort evidenced by Judas, who "**repented himself**."

3. A probable mistranslation. While locusts are kosher, and though the Essenes used them as a food when they could find them (they aren't quite as common in Palestine as one might think), tracing the word back to the Hebrew, it refers to carob beans. The Jewish Mishna, coincidentally, verifies carob and honey as food of Nazirites. Note that carob pods were the "**husks**" that the Prodigal Son wished to fill his own belly with.

4. The kosher form of baptism/immersion involved a person dipping underwater three times (as even the 1st century Christian *Didache* shows). No one touched him during this, but up to three witnesses might stand by to verify the baptism was performed correctly, for if so much as the top of the head failed to submerge, then the baptism had to be redone.

Unlike our modern Western culture, baptism was usually performed in the nude. Thus, there is no reason to suppose that John's baptism took place with attention given to modesty as the movies portray. This brings up an interesting question: What was the role of women in the formula? Women would not have been allowed to be present at a men's baptism, and there are two options:

1. John's wife (if he had one) or else some godly women followers* conducted separate baptism rituals for females.
2. That women did not participate in John's baptism, for although in Judaism women immersed for numerous reasons, we have no certain New Testament proof that women ever received his baptism. Most, however, presume they did. If so, they likewise did it nude. By the time of Acts, something had changed in the formula since Paul baptizes Lydia who presumably was clothed; and Philip baptized both men and women. Maimonides also allowed for potential clothed immersion provided both the person and his clothing were washed clean beforehand.

Last of all, the end of the verse, which mentions followers verbally "**confessing**" their sins to all, is written in a way indicating it was done as a part of the ritual.

* Jewish writings may give some enlightenment on this matter, for it is recorded: *The women place a woman in the waters up to the neck; and two disciples of the wise men, standing without, instruct her about some lighter precepts of the law and some weightier, while she, in the meantime, stands in the waters. And then she plungeth herself; and they, turning away their faces, go out, while she comes up out of the water.*

5. Josephus on the Pharisees.

Now, for the Pharisees, they live meanly, and despise delicacies in diet; and they follow the conduct of reason; and what that prescribes to them as good for them they do; and they think they ought earnestly to strive to observe reason's dictates for practice. They also pay a respect to such as are in years; nor are they so bold as to contradict them in any thing which they have introduced; and when they determine that all things are done by fate, they do not take away the freedom from men of acting as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that the will of man can act virtuously or viciously. They also believe that souls have an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again; on account of which doctrines they are able greatly to persuade the body of the people; and whatsoever they do about Divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform them according to their direction; insomuch that the cities give great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.

6. Josephus on the Sadducees.

But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of any thing besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent: but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity. But they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them.

Josephus on the Essenes.

The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for; and when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves; yet is their course of life better than that of other men; and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry. It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness; and indeed to such a degree, that as it hath never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so hath it endured a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer any thing to hinder them from having all things in common; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all. There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another. They also appoint certain stewards to receive the incomes of their revenues, and of the fruits of the ground; such as are good men and priests, who are to get their corn and their food ready for them. They none of them differ from others of the Essenes in their way of living, but do the most resemble those Dacae who are called (city people).

7. John may have been baptizing where Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan and erected 12 large memorial stones (Josh. 4), and these may be the stones he refers to.

8. Though often presumed to be the fire of the Holy Spirit upon Christians, John seems to be speaking back and forth to his followers along with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Thus, the fire spoken of refers to the latter groups being consumed in wrath, and not to "Holy Ghost fire" on believers. This is why Mark omits the verse about fire in Mark 1:8 in his record of John's words.

9. Jesus does not seek baptism because He has need of repentance. He may be doing so to identify with us. Or, He could be

immersing because He is now going to begin His ministry as a rabbi. Immersion would be appropriate to reflect His change in status from a layperson to a teacher of the Torah. It is also possible that He is undergoing baptism as part of a priestly ordination.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 4

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.
2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.
3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God¹, command that these stones be made bread.
4 But he answered, and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,
6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.²
7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.³
10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.
12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;
13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:
14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,
15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;
16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.
17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.
19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.
20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.
21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.
22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.
23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues⁴, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,

MATTHEW CHAPTER 4

1 Then the Spirit of God led Jesus up into the desert to be tempted by the devil.
2 He fasted a full forty days and nights, and afterward was very hungry.
3 When the Tempter came to him [in his weakness], he said: If you're really the Son of God, command that these rocks turn into bread!
4 But Jesus answered: It is written in the Scriptures that, *Men shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that God speaks.*
5 Next, the devil took Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem and set him upon the pinnacle of the Temple.
6 He said: If you're the Son of God, jump down--for it's written in the Scriptures: **He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.**
7 Jesus' reply was: It is again written in the Scriptures, **Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.**
8 Then the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and gave him a vision of all the world's kingdoms and their glory.
9 He said to Jesus: All these [people and nations] I will give to you if, falling down, you will do an act of worship to me.
10 Then Jesus said to him: Get away, Satan! It is written, **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve!**
11 Then the devil left, and angels came and ministered to Jesus.
12 Now when Jesus heard that Herod Antipas had cast John into a dungeon, he went back to Galilee.
13 And after leaving Nazareth, he moved to Capernaum [the city of Nahum the prophet], which is on the coast of the Sea of Galilee in the regions assigned to the tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali,
14 So a prophecy of Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled:
15 **The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;**
16 **The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.**
17 From that point forward, Jesus [took up the message of John, preaching and proclaiming]: Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!
18 One day, Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee and saw two brothers--Shimon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother--who were casting a net into the great lake, for they were fishermen.
19 Jesus said to them: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of *men*!
20 So they immediately left their nets, and followed him.
21 Going along the shore, he found two other brothers, James and John, who were mending their fishing nets in a boat with their father Zebedee, and Jesus called them too.

and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.
 24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed⁵ with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.
 25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

22 So they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Jesus.
 23 Jesus then went all around the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the “Good news” of the Messianic Kingdom, and healing all sorts of sickness and disease troubling the people.
 24 Jesus’ reputation spread throughout all Syria, and the people flocked to him with all the sick people who were diseased or in pain; and others who were demon-possessed, insane, or paralyzed--and he healed them!
 25 Because of this, massive crowds from Galilee, the “Ten Cities” region, Jerusalem, Judea, and other lands far beyond the Jordan, followed him wherever he went.

1. Some teachers believe that the devil was attempting to get Jesus to independently resort to His own supernatural power to relieve His hunger, disqualifying Him as our redeemer since He would have failed to live completely as a human man by turning to the power of His own divinity to solve His problems. As mentioned in the introduction, the term “**Son of God**” is primarily a synonym for “the Messiah” or “King of Israel.”

2. By means we do not know, the devil brings Jesus atop the Temple in Jerusalem, 175 feet above the city, tempting Him to perform a supernatural act in front of all Jerusalem to prove to the masses He is the Messiah.

3. This is an interesting event. Can it be that we have the devil, who knows precisely who Jesus is--God in the flesh--has the gall to tempt his very creator, who can destroy him with a single word, into falling down and actually ‘**worshipping**’ him? Unlikely.

So to understand the event, we must look beyond what *seems* to be happening, and use reason to determine what is *actually* happening. If we accept that there is no logic whatever in the devil trying to get his own creator to worship him, we can then surmise that Satan’s true offer is not the authority of the Gentile kingdoms (which the Scriptures indicate are God’s to give anyway), but rather the lost souls *within* those kingdoms over whom the devil has ultimate ownership and control. Thus, Satan is not trying to get Christ to worship him as his god. He is seeking some level of Christ’s acknowledgment of his temporal authority, and by this to undoubtedly preserve his own existence. Some commentators otherwise believed this incident to be one whose ultimate purpose was to reveal to Satan just who Jesus was. Whatever the case, Jesus does not give Satan’s claimed legal authority even minimal acknowledgment.

4. The synagogue is not a biblical invention, but originated during the Babylonian captivity as a means for the Jews to retain knowledge of their religion and customs. Upon the Jews’ return to Palestine, the synagogues provided a place of worship, teaching, and fellowship.

5. The word is *daimonizomenoi*, which is translated as “**possessed**,” although the term *demonized* is a better rendering. A great can of worms is opened within Christian circles because of this word, with some believing that Christians can, and others that they cannot, fall into the category of being *demonized*. As the Gospels show, someone *demonized* can undergo a variety of effects from minor physical illness to full demonic *possession*. The assertion that Christians are entirely immune to forms of *demonization* short of whole *possession* does not appear to be fully substantiated by the New Testament, although that belief is within orthodox theology.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 5

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:
 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,
 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
 5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
 6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
 7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
 8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
 9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
 10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and

MATTHEW CHAPTER 5

1 And seeing the vast host of people, he went up upon a hill [so that his voice could be heard more clearly], and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him.
 2 Then Jesus began to speak, and taught them, saying:
 3 Blessed are those who are [humble and contrite], for theirs is Kingdom of heaven.
 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
 7 Blessed are those who show mercy to others, for they will have mercy shown to them.
 8 Blessed are those with *pure hearts*, for they shall *see God*.
 9 Blessed are those who work to bring peace to the earth, for they shall be called the children of God.
 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing what is right, for the Kingdom of heaven awaits them.
 11 Blessed are you when you’re slandered, persecuted, and lied about because you follow me.
 12 Rejoice, and be very glad--for you have a great reward waiting for you in heaven since this is how they persecuted the prophets before you!
 13 You are the salt of the earth. But if, like diluted salt, you

persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.¹

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.²

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.³

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.⁴

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.⁵

21 Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca⁶, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool⁷, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart⁸.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not

lose that which makes you a force of seasoning and preservation, what good are you? You are no better than the salt that is strewn in the Temple courts during wintertime that men trample upon.

14 You are all lights in this world, and like a city that is built upon a hill you cannot hide what you are.

15 Men don't light a candle and hide its light under a basket! They put it in a candlestick so everyone in the house is able to see in the darkness.

16 So let the light of God in you so shine that people will see your good deeds, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

17 Don't misunderstand my purpose, for I have not come to distort or overturn the Law or the prophets [as some might be claiming]. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

18 I assure you that if it takes to the end of time itself, not so little as one point of minutiae will pass from the commandments--until the whole of the Law completes its ordained purpose!

19 So whoever breaks so little as one insignificant commandment, and teaches others some rationale for doing so, will be called the lowest of the low in the Kingdom of heaven! But whoever follows the commandments of God, and teaches others to follow them as well, shall be called a great man in the Kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of [hypocrites like] the Torah teachers and Pharisees, you have no chance of entering into the Kingdom of heaven.

21 For instance, you've heard it was said from ancient times, **Thou shalt not kill**, and whoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment...

22 But I want you to know that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment! And if you verbally denounce a brother in the community, you may be taken to court for slander--but if you [pass judgment upon another person's salvation or right standing with God when it is not your place to do so,] you are in danger of hellfire yourself!

23 Therefore, if you bring a sacrificial gift to the altar and there recall that a brother has something against you,

24 Leave your gift before the altar, go make amends with your brother, and *then* come back to make the gift offering.

25 If an adversary sues you, settle your debt before the judge intervenes even if it's on the courthouse steps--because, if you're in the wrong, the judge may hand you over to the jailer, and he will throw you into Debtor's Prison!

26 I tell you truly, once the gavel comes down you won't get out of prison until you find a way to pay off every cent of what you owe from behind bars. [And how could you do that, once you're in prison?]

27 [With this in mind,] consider the fact that from days of old you've heard it said: **Thou shalt not commit adultery**.

28 But I want you to know that a person who simply looks upon another and fantasizes about them--even if it goes no further--is guilty of adultery in his heart so far as God is concerned [and a price must be paid for that sin]!

29 So if you can't turn your right eye away from an attractive woman or man--pluck it out, and throw it away! It's better to lose an eye than to have your whole body wind up in hell! [Where, like the man in Debtor's Prison, you will stay until you've paid the full debt.]

30 As well, if your hand is used for your own lustful self-gratification--cut it off, and throw it away! Better to have no hand than to let your hand lead you to destruction, and your

that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30 And if thy right hand offend⁹ thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.¹⁰

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.¹¹

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.¹²

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.¹³

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.¹⁴

whole body wind up in hell! [Where, like the man in Debtor's Prison, you will stay until you've paid the full debt from behind bars.]

31 It's been said that, *A man who wants to divorce his wife should write out a Bill of Divorce, and send her away.*

32 But I tell you that as far as God is concerned, any man who divorces his wife for a reason other than her committing fornication, makes her, and anyone she subsequently marries, both adulterers [because God still considers her married to her first husband--and the man who divorced her to start with will be called to account for his action that caused two others to wind up in sin!]

33 You've heard it has been said by people since the olden days, *You shall not swear falsely, but will carry out the oaths you make by invoking God as a witness.*

34 But I tell you not to make vows at all! Do not swear at all, or invoke heaven as a witness, for that is where God's throne is.

35 Do not swear by anything upon the earth, for it is God's footstool; nor should you swear by Jerusalem itself, for as the Psalm says, it is 'the city of the Great King' [--the Messiah].

36 Don't even swear by your own head, because you can't even make one hair white or black.

37 But just agree or disagree to a thing and leave it at that--because anything else is of the Evil One.

38 You've heard it said that it is acceptable to take reasonable vengeance for wrongs done to you--*eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.*

39 But I tell you, don't take that attitude and resist evil done to you by someone. And if a person insults you, ignore it.

40 If anyone wants to sue you for your robe--hand over your cloak, too.

41 [If a Roman soldier invokes his right under their law, and compels you to carry his equipment for one mile--carry it for two miles!]

42 Give to anyone who asks, and don't refuse someone who wants to borrow from you.

43 [You have heard the Essenes say:] "A man should love his neighbor, but hate his enemy."

44 But I say to love your enemies as well, and bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who take advantage of, or persecute you.

45 In doing this, you will be children of your Father in heaven, for He has the sun rise on the evil as well as the good, and sends rain to good people as well as bad.

46 For if you love only those who love you back, what reward is there in that? Even tax collectors [--the most hated people in our society--] do that!

47 And if you wish Godspeed only to those in your own circle of friends, how are you being any better than the tax collectors who do likewise?

48 By doing these things I've told you, you will demonstrate the attributes of your Father in heaven, and thus *be perfect as He is perfect!*

1. A reference to the practice of taking unusable salt and casting it in the courtyards of the Temple during winter.

2. A common misunderstanding from reading this verse is that Jesus means He has come to keep the Law for us so that we are freed from the responsibility. While this is true to a degree, Mosely, Stern, and others point out that the proper understanding of the word "fulfill" would be in the sense of correctly walking in and teaching the Torah, while the word "destroy" is better understood as to reject the Torah or to teach it incorrectly. Their interpretation fits the context of the chapter very well. That noted, the ultimate truth is that Christ fulfils everything the Law points to, and once that happens, the Law completes its purpose and passes into history.

3. The words "till all be fulfilled" can be interpreted at least a couple of different ways:

Jesus is saying that the Law will be in force perpetually, and that everyone should keep it in every age. Thus, the Law is an eternal covenant that can never end nor be superseded. The person with this view would point to passages like Isaiah 2:3, Zechariah 14:16 and Ezekiel 43:18, which seem to indicate that even in the Messianic Age the Torah will be the Law of the

Land, and the Gentile nations will keep the Jewish Festivals at a Millennial Temple that will conduct animal sacrifice. The problem with this view is that it would be at variance with the totality of Paul's writings, the ruling in Acts 15 absolving Gentiles from having to become circumcised and convert to Judaism and its Law, the Book of Hebrews' denunciation of the Mosaic covenant and its animal sacrifice; and Galatians 4's affirmation there are *two* separate covenants, the one from Sinai being superseded by the covenant based on faith.

A more valid view is that Jesus, knowing that the Jewish leaders will irrevocably break that covenant by rejecting Him, is saying that the Law remains in force until He, as its fulfillment, completes the entire work of redemption through the Crucifixion. At that point, certain parts are cast by the wayside (such as the sacrificial system), and what remains of the Law thereafter is useful only as a basis for godly living, or as a tool to help the Jews to retain their cultural identity as a people. Thus, the Torah, as a covenant, is superseded by the New covenant in Christ's blood which is based on better promises than what the Old covenant provided. The Old Testament passages cited earlier might thus be viewed as what would have happened had Israel accepted the Messiah and seen the Messianic Kingdom ushered in when Christ presented Himself to the people. (Note that some theologians hold that the prophecies were actually fulfilled in the 2nd Temple period.)

4. Again, Jesus' words here can be understood from two different perspectives: Anyone, in any generation, who teaches that some point of Mosaic Law need not be obeyed is "**least**" in comparison to a "**great**" man who teaches they *all* should be kept; or, Jesus is actually clarifying His own personal affirmation that He would never overturn any point of the Law--while the Law is still in effect as a covenant! As we know and will be seeing in later chapters, the religious leaders regularly criticize Jesus because He is less strict than they in His understanding of Torah observance. This may have caused Him in verse 17 to correct a misunderstanding that his views equate to an endorsement of loosening up restrictions in Mosaic Law. As a Messiah operating under the Mosaic covenant, Jesus is thus showing the people what proper keeping of Mosaic Law entails, which is vastly different from what the Pharisees and Sadducees believe. In the dispensation of the Mosaic covenant, not even the slightest commandment can be ignored, and this explains Jesus' strong affirmation that every commandment is critical, and great men will teach others to observe them all. However, Israel is soon headed for a train wreck by its ultimate rejection of the Mosaic covenant as a consequence of its rejection of Christ as king *under* that covenant. Once that happens and the religious leaders irrevocably abrogate the covenant of Sinai, a New covenant--something in God's ultimate plan--is instituted and offered not just to Israel, but to all people. As Paul writes in Gal. 3: 17, the ultimate covenant between God and man is the *Abrahamic* covenant which existed entirely outside of the later Mosaic covenant. The later covenant, however holy and glorious it may have been, cannot modify, cancel, or replace the older, more important covenant instituted between God, Abraham, and his descendants on the basis of faith only! Thus, while the Sinai covenant is "**waxing old and ready to vanish away**" because of Israel's impenitent heart, that covenant--whether in force or not--has no bearing on the fulfillment of the more important Abrahamic covenant that is based solely on faith, and not on obedience to commandments! Thus, in a dispensation where the Mosaic covenant is in force and retains the potential to see a Messianic kingdom established within its defined parameters, teachers of truth will extol all points of the Law including the minutiae. But once that covenant is rejected for the final time by the generation to whom the Messiah has come--that covenant passes away for good, leaving the greater Abrahamic covenant of faith intact through the atonement of Messiah's sacrifice.

5. Here, Jesus begins to cause his listeners to question their traditional understanding of righteousness. Across the board, the Pharisees were understood as the most fanatic followers of both the written and oral Torahs to a degree the average person could not likewise devote himself. Jesus now shows that even the fanatical observance of the Torah by the Pharisees is insufficient to grant sufficient righteousness to earn a place in heaven with God. Thus, as important as the Law may be, only a greater righteousness than a man is capable of obtaining through obeying its commandments will suffice to save him from hell--i.e., the ultimate righteousness that comes not through Law, but through faith alone.

6. A word meaning an *idiot*, but in context here referring to the *rashim*, the wicked who were hell-bound. In the culture, the wicked were to be scorned, treated with contempt, and shunned.

7. A word related in idea to *rasha/rashim*, but going a step further to an early Pharisee Calvinistic-like doctrine of predestination that held some of the sinners were so far gone that God had predestined them for hell, and they were incapable of repentance. Jesus is thus saying that one who makes a proclamation that an individual is predestined for hell is in danger himself of hellfire. Although this stretches credulity, another option is that Jesus is confirming a rabbinic belief that one of the three sorts of people who must spend eternity in hell without hope of leaving is a man who calls a Jew a bad name. (The others are someone who cohabits with a married woman, and someone who shames another Jew in public.)

8. One of only two points in which Jesus appears to hold a view in agreement with the school of Shammai, for the followers of Shammai held that a sinful thought constituted sin, whereas the Hillelites believed that sin occurred only in carrying out the act.

9. A probable reference to sexual self-gratification, for which the Talmud likewise encourages cutting off of the hand that "reaches below the navel" (Niddah 13a). Otherwise, it could be an idiomatic reference to thievery.

10. The second point on which Jesus sides with Shammai, for the school of Hillel was very liberal on divorce, permitting it for a wide variety of reasons, while the school of Shammai generally forbade it except for adultery or Scripturally illicit marriages.

11. A Middle Eastern saying referring to being insulted, and not to a literal slap across the face. The *Tosefta* (Baba Kamma 9:29f) also encourages one "struck on the cheek" to forgive even an unrepentant person. Paul uses the term in this manner in 2 Cor. 11:20.

12. Referring to the fact that a Roman soldier could compel a civilian in an occupied territory to carry his goods for up to one mile.

13. A criticism of Essene teachings in their *Rule of the Community*.

14. Although referring to Deut. 18:13, which calls on the Jews to be "**perfect**," Jesus is not literally commanding the listeners to live in sinless perfection (which we may infer by the fact that no one departs in offense as in John 6:60). Rather, He is encouraging them to adopt God's heart and attitudes toward others, reflecting the holiness and righteousness of the Father in heaven.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 6

1 Take heed that ye do not your alms¹ before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not

MATTHEW CHAPTER 6

1 Make sure that you never do a good deed publicly--to be praised by others--or your Father in heaven will not reward you!

2 When you give alms, [don't do it publicly] as the

sound a trumpet² before thee, as the hypocrites³ do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have⁴ their reward.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have⁴ their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet⁵, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions⁶, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily⁷ bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil⁸, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot

hypocrites do, sounding a trumpet so that everyone in synagogues and the streets knows about it and thinks well of you! Those who do their good deeds publicly can count on nothing more than public praise as their only reward.

3 When *you* do something charitable, [do it as secretly as you can], and then never give it another thought.

4 If you do things in secret, the day will come when your Father, who sees things done in secret, rewards you openly, before everyone.

5 Also, when you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who pray loudly and call attention to themselves in the synagogues and the street corners so people marvel at how religious they are! I tell you truly, they have all the reward they will ever get.

6 So when *you* pray to your Father, go do so in a private place, and shut the door so no one knows. Then your Father, who sees everything done in secret, shall reward you openly.

7 Also, when you pray, don't be like the pagans who compose an hour-long monologue, thinking God will hear them because of all their words.

8 Don't be like them--your Father knows what your needs are before you even ask!

9 Pray simply, like this: *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

10 *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

11 *Give us this day our daily bread.*

12 *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

13 *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

14 Remember--if you forgive men who do wrong to you, God will forgive your own sins that do wrong to Him!

15 But if you refuse to forgive those who wrong you, your Father will not forgive your wrongs either!

16 Also, when you undertake a fast, don't be like the hypocrites who go around looking weak and sickly so everyone can see how religious they are. I want you to know that's the only reward they'll get!

17 So when *you* fast, [do it in such a way that you look perfectly normal],

18 So no one but your Father will know what you're doing--and your Father, who sees everything done in secret, shall reward you openly.

19 Don't set your sights on hoarding earthly wealth and possessions that can break, wear out, or be lost to thieves.

20 But set your sights on heaven [and the eternal], and store your treasure up there, where it can never be lost, stolen, or waste away.

21 For where your treasure is, your heart will be also.

22 The body has good light to see by when a man has good eyesight. But a blind man can't do anything but stumble around in darkness.

23 In the same way, if you have a [greedy, covetous heart], you are trapped in the darkness of spiritual blindness, and are much worse off than a simple blind man.

24 No man can be a slave to two masters; he must choose between them, and love the one while hating the other. So you cannot serve God [who wants you to be a giver], while at the same time you give in to the greedy acquisition of wealth [Satan] tempts you with.

25 This is why I tell you not to worry about your life,

serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?⁹

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

wondering what you'll eat or drink; or worry about your body and what you will clothe it with. Isn't life meant to be more than food, and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air--they don't buy and sell, or invest and profit. But your heavenly Father feeds them just the same. Don't you think you're more important than birds to Him?

27 Which of you, by worrying about it, can add even one hour to your life?

28 And why are you so worried about your clothing?

Look at the beauty of the wild lilies growing around us--they don't work for a living, nor do they spin cloth.

29 But I tell you, even King Solomon, in all his wealth and glory, wasn't clothed in garments any more beautiful than the petals of these flowers [which God clothed them with].

30 So if God is concerned enough to clothe the grass in the field, which is here one day and used as kindling the next, why do you have no faith to believe He will clothe *you* without your minds constantly worrying about money, you doubters?

31 Therefore, stop worrying and saying things like, "What shall we eat?" "What shall we drink?" Or, "What shall we wear?"

32 For those are the sorts of things the pagans spend all their time worrying about! Your Father in heaven already knows you need these things.

33 But make your primary emphasis that of finding your part in God's kingdom, and following after His righteousness. Then He will see to it you have all these other things.

34 So don't spend your time worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow is coming whether you worry about it or not. [God will help you deal with each day's problems as they come.]

1. Better understood as: '**Acts of charity**'.

2. A probable reference to a series of 13 trumpet-shaped collection boxes within the Court of Women at the Temple. The shape caused coins deposited in the receptacles to make a loud noise, bringing attention to the act. The truly humble could deposit their alms secretly in the *chamber of secrets* (or *silence*), a room of the Temple, and this is probably part of what Jesus is talking about.

3. The first instance in the New Testament where "**hypocrites**" are mentioned. This fact has been the root cause of much anti-Semitism--and little wonder, for virtually no reasonable counter-balance to the impression conveyed by the Gospels is given in the Scriptures. But if the New Testament, secular, and Jewish history are all fundamentally correct, the only conclusion is that this was a low point in the history of Israel when the priesthood was corrupt, and the most influential members of the Pharisee movement were rife with hypocrisy. As mentioned in *What you never knew about the Pharisees*, I trace this widespread hypocrisy to one group of powerful Pharisees who followed the teachings of Shammai. With the fall of the School of Shammai in 70 AD, such hypocrisy largely died with it as the school of Hillel gained ascendancy. In fact, the Talmud, written by the descendants of the school of Hillel, is honest and critical about hypocrisy, listing seven sorts of Pharisees, only one of which is righteous:

The *shikmi* Pharisee: One who either converts because he is forced to (as in the case of the Shechemites in Genesis 34), or one who advertises his religious obligations.

The *nikpi* Pharisee: One who walks with an exaggerated humility.

The *kizai* Pharisee: The Pharisee who willfully commits a sin believing that a good deed atones for it.

The '*pestle*' Pharisee: One who walks around with his head bowed like a pestle in a mortar.

The Pharisee who constantly asks, "What is my duty that I may perform it?" (A possible dig at the Shammaiites.)

The Pharisee who is one because of a love for God.

The Pharisee who is one out of fear.

The Talmud (Sotah 22b) also records the king Alexander Jannaeus on his deathbed warning his wife to, "Fear not the Pharisees and the non-Pharisees, but the hypocrites who mimic the Pharisees." Thus, from all sources, it is apparent that indeed there was an influential group of hypocrites within the Pharisee movement, and it is these hypocrites with whom Christ strove throughout His ministry.

4. The word "**have**" is a strong verb referring to one who can expect nothing beyond what he has been given.

5. Not necessarily referring to where you hang your clothes, but a possible exhortation to pull up one's prayer shawl around him to cover his face.

6. This is either a warning against saying codified prayers in the belief that this act gets God's attention (for instance, mechanically rattling off 10 Rosaries, thinking God is impressed); or else it is a criticism of overly lengthy prayers in which the petitioner argues with God, trying to convince Him, through logic and reasoning, to grant his request. The latter is more likely since codified prayers

were a staple of Judaism, and Jesus Himself institutes the Lord's Prayer, which is a codified prayer.

7. This is a unique word (*epiousios*) unknown in the Greek language, and its meaning is a matter of speculation.

8. To have an "evil eye" in that culture referred to a greedy person. As a point of interest, a stingy Jew in the time of Christ was one who only tithed 40% of his goods. (The pious tithed 60%.)

9. The actual translation is not talking about height, but rather adding time to one's life.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 7

1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.¹
 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
 3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?
 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?²
 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.
 6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.
 7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?
 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?
 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?
 12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.³
 13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.
 15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy

MATTHEW CHAPTER 7

1 Don't act as your own judge and jury, lest judgment come back upon *you*!
 2 For God will judge you exactly the same way, and to the same degree, that you judge others!
 3 And why do some of you think you can see a splinter in the eyes of your brother when you don't realize there is actually a log in your own eye?!
 4 How can you say to a brother in the community, "Let me pull that splinter out of your eye, friend," when there's a log in your own?!
 5 You hypocrite--worry about removing the log of your own faults from your eye before you concern yourself with removing the splinter of your brother's!
 6 [Don't give holy things--like the wisdom or oracles of God--to profane people who think they know it all, lest they trample them down and turn on you like a pack of hungry pigs!]
 7 [Regarding prayer:] Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you.
 8 For everyone who asks shall receive, and everyone who seeks shall find; and the door will be opened to him who knocks.
 9 What man of you, for instance, if his son asked him for some bread would give him a rock to eat?
 10 Or if he wanted a broiled fish, would hand him a snake?
 11 If you fathers, being evil in comparison to your Father in heaven, bless your own children with good things--how much more is your Father wanting to bless with good things His own children who ask things of *Him*?
 12 Therefore, treat everyone with the same goodness and respect you'd want them to treat you with, for this is whole point of the Law and the Prophets.
 13 Enter through the small, narrow gate that is often ignored in favor of the wide, easy-to-pass-through gate, for the wide gate leads to destruction and many go through it.
 14 You see, the way to life is through the narrow gate, and it is hard, so there are few who find and enter that gate.
 15 Beware of false prophets who seem sincere and meek--like sheep--but inwardly are actually ravening wolves.
 16 You'll know them by the fruit of what they say and do. Men don't pick Grapes off thorn bushes, nor do they pick figs from thistles, do they?
 17 Likewise, good trees bring forth good fruit, and rotten trees bring forth evil fruit.
 18 A good tree cannot sprout bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot sprout good fruit.
 19 And rotten trees are cut down and burned up [because their fruit is good for nothing].
 20 Thus, by the fruit of what they do, you shall know the good ministers from the bad.
 21 Not everyone who pays lip service to me, saying, "Lord! Lord!" will enter the Kingdom of heaven--but only the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.
 22 At the Last Judgment, many [who thought they were proclaiming my Word, but actually perverting it], and some who even cast out demons or worked miracles, thinking it

name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?
 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:⁴ depart from me, ye that work iniquity.
 24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:
 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:
 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.
 28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:
 29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

was with me behind them, will say to me, "Lord! Lord! Haven't we [proclaimed what you wished us to], and cast out demons, and worked many miracles in your name?!"
 23 But I will say back to them, "[I had no part with you!] Get out of my sight, you workers of iniquity!"
 24 Thus, whoever hears, understands, and obeys my teachings, is like a wise man who built his house upon solid bedrock.
 25 Rains, floods, and winds could not move the house because it was built on the perfect foundation.
 26 But anyone who hears my teachings and ignores them is like a fool who built his house on a sandy flood plain.
 27 The rain, floods, and winds came against the house and washed it away, and not a trace of it was left!
 28 At the conclusion of Jesus' speech, the people were amazed at his doctrines he taught.
 29 For he taught with the assurance of someone with absolute authority [whose word was not subject to debate], rather than the Torah teachers [who would say this rabbi taught this, while that rabbi taught that, leaving the people to try to decide whose opinion was the right one].

1. This is the only verse of Scripture most agnostics know. It would be good to note a more complete verse given in John 7:24 about judging actions and motivations: "**Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.**" Even so, John 7 is said in a different context than this verse here. If, however, we look at the fuller context of *this* verse provided in Luke 6, we see Jesus is not so much talking about judging actions or motivations, but He is warning the people not to act as their own judge, and retaliate for wrongs done to them by others, something that Paul reaffirms in Romans 12:19! Thus, the verse absolutely *does not* mean Christians are forbidden to confront the world about its sin and declare it as such; and the non-Christian who quotes this verse as a warning against someone's criticizing his unbiblical lifestyle shows his ignorance.

2. A midrashic saying Jesus is quoting. "*It is written in the days when they judged the judges, that is, in the generation which judged their judges, When any (judge) said to another, Cast out the mote out of thine eye; he answered, Cast you out the beam out of your own eye.*"

3. Jesus here paraphrases the great Hillel who, in turn, was paraphrasing Tobit 4:14-15 ("**Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and be disciplined in all your conduct. And what you hate, do not do to any one.**") and applying the axiom as a summation of the heart of the Torah. The Talmud records the incident as follows:

A certain heathen (Gentile) came to Shammai, and said to him, "Make me a proselyte, on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot." Thereupon, Shammai drove him off with the builder's rod that was in his hand. When he went to Hillel, Hillel said to him, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah; all the rest of it is commentary; go and learn." --Shabbat 31a, Jerusalem Talmud.

Also, the term *Law & the prophets* didn't necessarily refer to the written Torah of Moses and men like Isaiah or Jeremiah, but was a term most often referring to the written and oral Torahs. Part of the oral Torah of the Jews, the *Takkanot* (extraneous religious laws), and *Gezeirah* (rules that go beyond the Torah to keep the Jews from even accidentally violating some part of it) are the "**traditions**" Jesus so rebuked the Pharisees for.

4. "**I never knew you**" is an idiomatic way of saying something along the lines of: "I never approved of you and what you were doing," "I had no part in this," etc.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 8

1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.
 2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped¹ him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.
 3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.
 4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.
 5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,
 6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.
 7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 8

1 When Jesus descended the mountain, great crowds followed him.
 2 Then a man whose skin was stricken with psoriasis or leprosy ran up and knelt at his feet, saying: Lord, if you want to, you can cleanse me of this defiling disease!
 3 Jesus reached out and touched the man, saying: I want to--be cleansed from this ailment! And his skin disease was immediately cleansed.
 4 Then Jesus told him: See that you don't tell anyone about this miracle, but go to the High Priest and offer up the Gift of Thanksgiving mandated for it in the Law of Moses. That will be a testimony to the Sadducees [about who I am, and that God does indeed do miracles--unlike what they have come to believe].
 5 When Jesus entered into the city of Capernaum, a chief Roman centurion who'd heard of him urgently sought him out,
 6 Saying: Lord, my slave lies gravely ill in my house,

8 The centurion answered, and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.
 9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
 10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
 11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down² with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.
 12 But the children of the kingdom³ shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant⁴ was healed in the selfsame hour.
 14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid⁵, and sick of a fever.
 15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.
 16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:
 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.
 18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.
 19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.
 20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.
 21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.⁶
 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.
 23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.
 24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.
 25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.
 26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked⁷ the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.
 27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!
 28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.
 29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have

paralyzed and in anguish.
 7 Jesus said to him: I will come and heal him.
 8 But the centurion answered: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter into my house. Just command the healing be done, and my slave will be healed.
 9 For I am a man under authority, with other soldiers under me, and when I give an order to someone there is no question of its being carried out—I know it will be done. I say, “Go!” to a man and he goes; or “Come!” and he comes; or “Do this!” to a servant, and he obeys.
 10 When he heard this, Jesus couldn't believe his ears, and exclaimed to those following along: Truly I say that I have yet to find a Jew in Israel with faith this strong!
 11 And I say to you that many [Gentiles] shall come from the east and the west, and rest alongside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Messianic Kingdom.
 12 But the children for whom the Kingdom was created will be cast out of God's presence into outer darkness where there shall weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 13 Jesus then said to the centurion: Go your way—as you have believed, let it be done to you! And the [boy] was healed in the same hour!
 14 Now when Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw the mother of Peter's wife in bed, sick with a bad fever.
 15 He touched her hand, and immediately the fever vanished. Then the woman got up [and prepared food for them].
 16 When the sun went down, they brought many people to the house that were plagued by demons, and he cast them out by his command and healed all the people who were sick.
 17 This fulfilled a prophecy by Isaiah the prophet: **Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.**
 18 When Jesus saw what a commotion was being made over him by the crowd, he told the disciples they should all cross to the other side of the lake.
 19 As he was departing, a certain Torah teacher came up, and said: Master, I will follow you wherever you go.
 20 But Jesus replied: Foxes have dens, birds of the air have nests—but the Son of Man has not so little as a tent to sleep in. [Are you really prepared for the cost of following me?]
 21 Another disciple said: Lord—let bury my father first, and then I will come.
 22 But Jesus told *him*: Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead!
 22 [*Alternate reading--Aramaic*]: But Jesus told *him*: Follow me, and let the town bury the dead!
 23 Then Jesus entered a boat, and his disciples followed.
 24 After they departed, a great storm arose in the Sea of Galilee that threatened to swamp the ship. But Jesus was asleep through it.
 25 So the disciples awakened him and cried out: Lord—we're going to drown! Save us!
 26 Jesus replied: Why are you afraid, you doubters? Then he stood up in the boat, rebuked the wind and waves, and everything became completely calm.
 27 Those aboard were dumbfounded, and said: What sort of man is this that he commands even [the forces of nature]?!
 28 And when he crossed over to the region of the Gergesenes, he encountered two demon-possessed men coming out of the tombs, who haunted the graveyards like ghouls, and no one dared travel near them.
 29 The demons in them shouted out: What are you here for,

we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?
 30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.
 31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.
 32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.
 33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.
 34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

Jesus, Son of God? Are you come here to torment us before the time [of the final Judgment]?
 30 Now in the distance was a huge herd of pigs feeding.
 31 So the demons implored Jesus, saying: If you cast us out, at least send us into those [unclean] pigs [instead of casting us into perdition]!
 32 Jesus to them: Go. So the demons left the men and possessed the herd of pigs, driving them off a cliff and into the lake where they drowned.
 33 The flock's keepers ran away and spread word of what happened at the nearby town--how that the two demon-possessed men had been delivered, and the herd of pigs sent into the lake.
 34 And the whole city [--afraid--] came out to meet Jesus. But when they saw him, they urged him to go somewhere else and leave them alone.

1. The word here means to do obeisance, not that he worshipped in the way one would worship God.
2. The word translated as: "**sit down**" actually means to recline as Jesus does during the Last Supper.
3. Meaning the Jews, most of whom ultimately will not believe in God's Messiah, and thus be damned.
4. The "**servant**" is probably his son through an unofficial marriage. See the commentary in Luke 7 for more details.
5. In a near comatose state.
6. The man may be asking Jesus to permit him to wait until his father's actual death before leaving home. Otherwise, his father may have already died and been buried, and the son is going through the year-long process of grieving and saying *kaddish*--prayers for the dead--since some Jews, then and now, had a Purgatory-like belief in which prayers for the dead were thought to be either help the deceased, or else aid the living to do deeds of atonement for the loved one's sins. Jesus here would be understood as overturning those concepts by showing what is done is done, and thus the living can do no good for the dead. Lamsa also noted that Jesus' words in the Aramaic text could also be understood as the alternate reading renders it, which actually makes more sense than the Greek.
7. The word here is *epitimaō*, a word used throughout the New Testament in the context of rebuking/exorcising an evil spirit, which suggests that the whirlwind that caused this sudden and intense storm may have had a demonic origin.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 9

1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.¹
 2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.
 3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.²
 4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?
 5 For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?
 6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive³ sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.
 7 And he arose, and departed to his house.
 8 But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.
 9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom:⁴ and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.
 10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans⁵ and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.
 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?⁶
 12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they

MATTHEW CHAPTER 9

1 So Jesus returned to the boat and crossed back to Capernaum.
 2 Some people there brought up an infirmed man confined to a bed, hoping Jesus would heal him. Noting their faith, Jesus looked at the man, and said: Cheer up, Son--the sins that caused this disease are forgiven.
 3 This statement was an affront to some of the Torah teachers who were present, and they thought to themselves, *This man is a blasphemer [to put himself in the place of God, and forgive someone's sins]!*
 4 Jesus knew what they were thinking, and he asked: Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?
 5 Is it any easier [--or any less the province of God--] to tell someone his sins are forgiven, than it is to tell an infirmed man, "Get up, and walk"?
 6 But that you may know that I, the Son of Man [--the *bar Enash* prophesied of by Daniel--] have the authority on earth to forgive sins, I say to this sick man: Arise, and carry your bed back home!
 7 So the man got up and went home!
 8 When the people saw this miracle they were amazed, and rejoiced that God had visited them in such a manner, and given such power to men.
 9 Now as Jesus left there and passed the city gates, he saw a tax collector named [Matthew] sitting at the collection table, and he told him: Follow me! So [Matthew] left his table behind and followed him.
 10 Jesus spent the night at [Matthew's] house, and when dinner was served, many of the tax collectors under [Matthew's] control--and many non-religious friends of his as well--sat down with Jesus and his disciples.
 11 But when some Pharisees saw this, they asked the

that are sick.

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners⁷ to repentance.

14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler⁸, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:⁹

21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith¹⁰ hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,¹¹

24 He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

26 And the fame thereof went abroad into all that land.

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.

28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils

disciples: Why is your rabbi eating with these turncoat tax collectors and those other sinners?!

12 When Jesus heard that, he replied: The healthy aren't the ones who need a doctor--it's the sick!

13 Go and learn what the Scripture means when God says: *I desire mercy, not sacrifice*. You see, I'm not here to call righteous men to repentance; I'm here to reach the sinners!

14 Then some of John the Baptist's followers asked Jesus: Why do we and the Pharisees fast [and afflict our souls] regularly, but your disciples do not?

15 Jesus answered: Do groomsmen mourn at a wedding when the bridegroom is present? But eventually the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast [and mourn].

16 Also, no one sews a patch of brand new cloth on an old article of clothing, for the mixture of old and new cannot survive the process of washing, and will come apart.

17 Nor do men put fermenting wine in a stiff old wineskin that can crack and spill the contents out. You put new wine into a new wineskin and this keeps both safe.

18 While Jesus was speaking, a head of the local synagogue rushed up and knelt down, saying: My daughter has died, but come touch her, and she will live.

19 So Jesus got up and followed the man back to his house along with his disciples.

20 But as he went, a woman who had suffered a uterine discharge for twelve years hurried up from behind and touched the hem of his prayer shawl.

21 For she said to herself, *If I can only touch his clothing, I will be made whole!*

22 Jesus turned and saw her. Then he said: Daughter, don't be afraid [of what you have risked by touching me in the state you are in]. Your faith has cured you! And indeed, the woman was made whole from that very hour.

23 Jesus finally made it to the synagogue leader's house where a loud mourning party of minstrels and others had assembled.

24 He said to the people: Move out! This girl is not dead, but only asleep. But the people laughed in derision.

25 So Jesus had the mourners expelled from the house, then he went inside and took the child by the hand, and she arose.

26 And the tale of this miracle spread throughout the region.

27 When Jesus left the house, a couple of blind men followed along behind, crying out: Son of David--have mercy on us!

28 After Jesus returned to [Matthew's] house, the two came inside and Jesus asked them: Do you believe I am able to restore your sight? They said: Yes, Lord!

29 He touched each man's eyes, and said: Let it be done to you as you have believed.

30 Then they could see again, and Jesus sternly ordered them: Don't tell anyone about this miracle!

31 But the two couldn't contain their excitement, and after leaving spread word throughout the region what had happened.

32 [Things got so chaotic that Jesus and the disciples left town.] As they were departing, someone brought a man to be healed who had been struck dumb by a demon.

33 After Jesus cast the demon out of him the man was able to speak, and the crowds were amazed once again. They said: Israel has never seen anything like this!

34 But the Pharisees said: He is casting out demons because Beelzebub, Prince of demons, is empowering him!

through the prince of the devils.

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest¹², that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

35 Jesus went everywhere, teaching in the synagogues the good news that the Messianic Kingdom had come, and healing every sickness he came upon.

36 When Jesus saw the vast host of people, he was moved with compassion because they were so desperate to see him that they were getting sick from hunger and lack of water, like sheep with no shepherd to watch after them.

37 He told the disciples: The harvest is rich, but there aren't enough workers to harvest the crops!

38 Pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send workers to bring His harvest in!

1. Capernaum.

2. Their thoughts, at this point in time, are entirely correct--for who *but* God can forgive sin?! It is this fact--that God in the flesh stands before them--which the Jews, whom Christ has come to redeem, will never accept.

3. A point can be made here that the forgiveness is in the sense of remitting the temporal penalty for sins. Since Christ has yet to be crucified, the ultimate atonement and washing away has yet to occur. But prior to this, Jesus is exercising divine authority to remit the temporal consequences of sin.

4. In Israel, there were two sorts of tax collectors, the *gabbai*, who collected taxes on produce, along with an income and "head tax" on all who were teenagers or older; and the *mokhsa*, who had greater authority, and could levy fees at will when the occasion called for it: Taxing goods, charging tolls, enacting tariffs, and so on. If the first sort of tax-gatherer was hated by the people, the latter was despised. Matthew may have been a *mokhsa*. Zaccheus, in Luke's Gospel, certainly was. If necessary, they could use torture to collect. (Note Clement of Alexandria claimed that Zaccheus was another name for Matthias, chosen in Acts to replace Judas.)

5. Possibly the *gabbaim* who were under Matthew's authority.

6. The attitude represents the feelings of not only the Pharisees, but also the Jews in general. Racial and cultural prejudice of the time created a myriad of barriers between Jews and the rest of the world, and even between the Jews and the Jews--but on this point everyone could agree: the tax collectors were fit only for scorn and shunning.

7. On the surface, meaning the *am ha aretz*, the "people of the soil," the average person who needed to come into full compliance with the Torah. On a spiritual level, Christ is showing that He is the savior of those who know they are sinners in need of a savior, for the man who believes he is living a life of sufficient goodness to be acceptable to God has no place in Him.

8. Jairus, the president of the local synagogue.

9. The woman touched the tassels of his prayer shawl, the traditional poncho-like garment of a pious man. (What people today mistakenly view as a prayer shawl--and what is often pawned off by some ministers using Christian witchcraft in association with it--was not invented until after 135 AD!) In the Torah (Num. 15:37-41 and Duet. 22:12), is a commandment to wear "fringes" on the corners of garments. The fringes are known as *tzit tzit*. There are 613 threads, representing the 613 commandments in the Torah, which are wound into tassels. David Stern points out that in this passage, and in the episode of healing the daughter that follows, Jesus overturns the traditional, and even Scriptural fact that impurity defiles the pure, for rather than Christ being defiled, the impure woman is healed, and the dead body of the child, rather than defiling Him, is restored to life! The woman is justifiably afraid, for to willingly touch, and thereby defile a man with her impurity, was a stoning offense.

10. A very problematic verse for those who are offended at the certain teaching of "faith principles." Here the woman, apparently because of her own faith, and without the conscious consent of Christ, in effect pulls a miracle out of Him!

11. As is the custom in other countries of the region, when someone died, a group of flute players and mourners would form a procession for the burial.

12. Possibly the only place in the New Testament showing a prayer to the Holy Spirit--whom Acts 13:2 shows is the one who calls forth laborers into ministry--although most presume the prayer is to the Father.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 10

1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Canaanite¹ and Judas Iscariot², who also betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles³, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 10

1 And when Jesus called his twelve disciples to him, he gave them authority against demonic spirits, to cast them out, and also gave them the power to heal all manner of sickness and disease.

2 These were the names of his twelve apostles: First was Shimon, who is also called Peter. Then Andrew his brother; and James and John, the sons of Zebedee;

3 Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew the tax collector, James, son of Alphaeus, Lebbaeus [Jude], who is surnamed Thaddeus,

4 Simon the Cananean, and finally Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

5 Jesus sent these twelve out, telling them: Don't go into any Gentile areas or Samaritan cities.

6 Go instead, he said, to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

7 As you go, preach: The Kingdom of heaven is at hand!

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
 8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.
 9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,
 10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.
 11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.
 12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.
 13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.
 14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.
 15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.
 16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.
 17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;
 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.
 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.
 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.
 21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.
 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.
 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.⁴
 24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.
 25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?
 26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.
 27 What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.
 28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your

out demons. Take no money for what you do, for freely you have received, so freely give!
 9 Don't even take any money with you when you start out,
 10 Nor take a sack, extra clothing, shoes or staffs on your journey, for the laborer deserves his pay. [Your needs will be met as they arise.]
 11 Whatever city you enter, ask around until you find a just family of good reputation to lodge with, and stay there until you move on.
 12 When you enter a house, [pronounce a blessing of peace upon it].
 13 And if the household is worthy let your blessing remain. If it is not worthy, let your blessing of peace return to you.
 14 And if anyone doesn't allow you into their home or their city, or if they reject what you say, shake the dust off your shoes as you leave.
 15 Believe me—God will show more mercy to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than He will to *that* town!
 16 I am sending you out as sheep marching toward waiting wolves, so use your heads and be wise as serpents, but also be gentle as doves.
 17 Watch out for [unbelieving] men, for they will haul you before religious tribunals, and have you beaten in their synagogues.
 18 You will also be brought in front of the governors and kings of the Jews and the Gentiles because of your commitment to me, and you will testify of me to them.
 19 But when this happens, don't plan out your strategy for answering the charges that will be brought against you, for the words you will need to say will be provided to you at the right time.
 20 They will come from the Spirit of your Father, and not from your own mind.
 21 [Over me,] *brother will betray brother to death, father will betray child, and children will betray their parents and cause them to be put to death.*
 22 Everyone will hate you because of who and what I am, and what I stand for—but he that endures to the end will be saved.
 23 When they persecute you in one city, flee to another, for you will not have time to reach every city in Israel before the Son of Man arrives!
 24 A student is not greater than his teacher, nor is a slave greater than his master.
 25 It is enough that the student be like his master, and the slave like his lord. If they call the Master "Beelzebub," how much more will they denigrate those of his household in the same way?
 26 But don't fear them [--since you will be vindicated, and they condemned, in the end: for the truth behind all men's deeds and motivations will be shown clearly for what they are].
 27 What I tell you in secret, speak openly. What I whisper to you, shout from the housetops.
 28 Don't fear those who can only kill your body, but not your soul--fear only God, who can destroy body *and* soul in hell!
 29 Aren't a couple of sparrows sold for pocket change? But none of them falls from the sky and dies without the knowledge and will of your Father.
 30 God knows *you* so well that He can even tell you how

Father.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

40 He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

many hairs are on your head.

31 So don't worry, for you mean more to God than many sparrows.

32 If someone admits he is one of mine before men, I will admit he is one of mine to my Father in heaven.

33 But if someone denies he is one of mine to men, I will deny he is one of mine to my Father in heaven.

34 Don't assume I'm here to bring forth the universal peace to the earth you've been taught the Messianic Age will see. [For now,] I am not here to bring peace, but to wield a sword!

35 For I am come to *set a son against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a wife against her husband's mother.*

36 Because of me, *a man's greatest enemies will live in his own house with him!*

37 But he who loves his father or mother, or son or daughter more than me is unworthy of me.

38 And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me [--enduring the persecution of standing for me--] is unworthy of me.

39 He who compromises, and finds some way to save his life, shall in the end lose it. And he who gives his life up for me shall find true life.

40 Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and if he welcomes me he welcomes Him who sent me.

41 He who welcomes a prophet because of what he is receives the same reward as the prophet he honors. He who shows hospitality to a righteous man gains the reward of a righteous man.

42 Any disciple who does so little as give a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers shall in no way lose his reward.

1. A mistranslation. It should be Simon the *Cananaean*. The Cananaeans were a sect of the *Zealots*, fanatical revolutionaries who advocated violent overthrow of the Romans. *Galileans*, by the way, was yet another slang term for Zealots, going back to Judas the Galilean who formed the Zealots in the early part of the 1st century.

2. The first mention of Judas. The meaning of his surname is a mystery. Possible interpretations are:

Ish Keriath--the most common belief is that Judas was a man from the city of Keriath, near Hebron. But since Judas was probably the son of Simon the leper, mentioned in Matthew 26:6 and John 12:4, this may not be true.

Iskorya--referring to an apron worn by tanners that had pouches sewn into them into which could be placed money, and so the reference could be understood as referring to the fact that Judas was the group's treasurer.

Sheqarya--an Aramaic word meaning a liar.

Ha Sicarii--meaning Judas may have been a member of the infamous *Sicarii*, a particularly violent group of Zealots who figured prominently in the revolt of 66 AD, and whose last stand was at Masada. The problem with this idea is that the Sicarii aren't really known by this name yet.

3. The Gospel must first be presented to the Jews, who were heirs to the promise. Only after the leaders of the Jews reject it is the way truly open for the Gentiles to be adopted into the family of God through faith, apart from converting to Judaism.

4. An odd statement that appears to suggest the apostles will not have the time to preach the Gospel in all the cities of Israel before the return of Christ. Possibly Jesus is speaking both in the immediate sense, and also prophesying about the future. He thus is saying the apostles will not reach all of Israel before the Crucifixion; and in the years subsequent to this, they will undergo the persecutions He warns of.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 11

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?¹

4 Jesus answered, and said unto them, Go and

MATTHEW CHAPTER 11

1 Having commissioned his twelve disciples, Jesus departed to teach and preach in their various Galilean cities.

2 Meanwhile John, who was locked up in prison, heard about the things the Messiah was doing [along with his teachings against violence], and so he sent two of his disciples.

3 They said to Jesus: John asks whether you are the One who is supposed to come, or should we look for someone else?

4 Jesus answered in reply: Go and tell John what you've heard and seen:

shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist;² notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.³

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.⁴

14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation?⁵ It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.⁶

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

5 That the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.

6 And blessed is he who does not stumble [if I don't do what he wants or expects me to].

7 As they left, Jesus began to say to the multitudes about John: What did you expect when you went into the wilderness to see John? [Someone whose word would change with the shifting winds of popular opinion like a reed shaking back and forth in the wind?]

8 Or some man dressed in expensive, comfortable attire? No--people who dress like nobles live in kings' castles.

9 But what was it that you went out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you--and much more than a prophet!

10 For John was the one Malachi foretold of when he wrote:

Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11 I tell you truly, of all the children ever born to women, there has never been a more important one than John the Baptist. Even so, the lowest-ranking person in the Messianic Kingdom is greater than he is [--and this is how much greater the covenant about to be instituted is than even the covenant under which John functions].

12 [And from the time of John's appearance to now, Satan has done all he can to keep the Messianic Kingdom from taking root, but it has forcefully sprouted just the same.]

13 For all the prophets and the Law of Moses pointed to and foretold the day John would arrive and herald the Kingdom.

14 And if you can accept it, John is Elijah, who was expected to appear before the Messiah himself.

15 If you can understand what I am saying, good!

16 Yet to what can I liken those of this generation who have heard the Message? They are like childish brats in the marketplace, whining out to each other:

17 "You didn't dance to our wedding march, so we played a funeral dirge, and you wouldn't mourn in response to that either. [What's *your* problem?]"

18 For John was [a Nazirite,] living a Spartan existence and avoiding food and wine, and they said, "He is [insane]!"

19 But then the Son of Man came, eating and drinking, and yet they complain, "He is a gluttonous drunkard who wants to get in good with tax collectors and sinners!" [As wise people show what they are by what they say and do, so witless people do likewise!]

20 Then he began to criticize the cities where he had done most of his miraculous deeds, because they would not repent:

21 Woe to you Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented to a man in goatskin and ashes [and their cities would have been spared].

22 I say to you that the sinners of Tyre and Sidon will see less punishment than *you* will at the Day of Judgment!

23 And you, Capernaum--will you be exalted up to heaven? No, you will be brought down to hell, because if the same things had been done in Sodom it would be standing to this day!

24 I promise you that the land of Sodom will get off easier than *you* will on the Day of Judgment!

25 At that time Jesus prayed, saying: I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you hid these truths from the intellectuals and the clever, revealing them instead to the simple.

26 Yes, Father, for it seemed good in Your sight to do so.

25 At that time Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.
 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.
 27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.
 28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
 30 For my yoke is easy⁷, and my burden is light.

27 The Father has given me [all power and authority], but none of you really knows who or what the Son is, but the Father does. And none of you knows who or what the Father is but the Son, and whoever else the Son chooses to reveal Him to.
 28 Come to me, all you who work and are wearied--and I will give you rest.
 29 Cast off your single-ox yoke, and take my double-ox yoke upon you, and learn from me--for I am gentle and humble in heart [and will do all the heavy work, that your soul may find rest].
 30 Because my burden is not one where *you* do the work; *I* am the one who shoulders the burden for you, and thus my yoke is a pleasure to bear!

1. Just what John is asking is open to interpretation. The possibilities follow:
 John, sitting in jail, is beginning to lose faith as Jesus seems to be taking a passive role in reaching out to the masses. Rather than coming forth as a conquering Messiah who will free the people, He seems to be rejecting overt kingship over Israel and instead only preaches repentance, love, and forgiving one's enemies. In order to satisfy himself, John sends representatives to ask specifically if Jesus is the promised Messiah. David Stern holds this opinion, proposing that John was surreptitiously asking for confirmation that Jesus was the Messiah, backing up his contention by pointing out that Jesus' surreptitious answer in verse 15 quotes from the text of Isaiah listing several miraculous things only the Messiah will do: Make the blind to see (Isaiah 29 and 35); the lame to walk (Isaiah 35 and 61); cleanse the leprous (Isaiah 61); open the ears of the deaf (Isaiah 29 and 35); raise the dead (Isaiah 11); and preach to the poor (Isaiah 61). Matthew may actually affirm this notion by going out of his way to call Jesus "**Christ**" (Messiah) in verse 2. However, I think that John is asking for clarification whether Jesus will fulfill the roles of both the *Messiah ben Joseph* (the "suffering Messiah") and the *Messiah ben David* (the "conquering Messiah"). Keep in mind that many Jews believed two Messiahs were coming: One who would minister spiritually to the Jews, and the greater Messiah who would usher in the Messianic Age. Since his followers are telling John that Jesus isn't saying or doing anything suggesting His imminent seizure of the throne of David, John asks if there is "**another**" Messiah yet to come who will fulfill the rest of the prophecies.
2. A problematic verse for Catholics and Eastern Orthodox who exalt Mary as being second only to Christ in favor and authority. Here, Jesus excludes His mother from such a lofty position and instead exalts His cousin as being the "**greatest**" person born.
3. One of the most difficult New Testament verses. This very liberal paraphrase may help one to understand the idea better:
"And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the demons have fought to hold back the Kingdom of heaven, but the righteous press forward and enter in, and by this advance the Kingdom on earth."
 The paraphrase otherwise makes another attempt at rendering this odd verse into English.
4. Meaning that the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies was culminated with the coming of Christ, who was presented by John to the masses.
5. Jesus now rebukes the religious leaders and points out that their selfish motives, more than an honest lack of theological understanding, prevent them from receiving the Kingdom, for they rejected John as mad ("**hath a demon**" can be a reference to madness) since he lived a Spartan lifestyle, and yet they reject Christ for living too extravagantly. It should also be noted that Christ's words about '**wisdom being justified by her children**' are rather difficult to understand in our culture, and the paraphrase departs from the text in an attempt to clarify the meaning more clearly. "**Children**" should probably have been translated as: "**Deeds**," or "**Actions**."
6. An interesting verse showing that a prime purpose for miracles is to show the reality of God to the sinner in hope of encouraging repentance.
7. This is hard for many of us to comprehend, but the Greek word denotes not just an "**easy**," but "**enjoyable**" burden!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 12

1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat.
 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.¹
 3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;
 4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?
 5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the

MATTHEW CHAPTER 12

1 Shortly thereafter, Jesus and his disciples happened to pass through a wheat field on a day that happened to be a Sabbath [for the Feast of Unleavened Bread]. The disciples being hungry, they [--but not Jesus--] began to pick some kernels of wheat to snack on.
 2 When some Pharisees saw this, they accosted Jesus, and said: Look there--your disciples are violating the Sabbath by harvesting grain!
 3 But Jesus answered: Did you never read what David did when he and his men were running from King Saul and were hungry?
 4 How he entered into the Tent Tabernacle and ate the *shewbread*, which was unlawful for him and his men to eat, but was supposed to be for the priests only? [And was God mad at that?]

sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?²

6 But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.³

11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.⁴

13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

16 And charged them that they should not make him known:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then

5 Or have you not read in the Torah how the priests in the Temple must work on the Sabbath, attending to their duties, but yet are blameless for that?

6 But I say to you that someone greater than even the Temple is here before you.

7 And again, if you understood the verse--*I desire mercy, not sacrifice*--you would not have criticized those who have not done wrong in God's eyes.

8 For the Son of Man is even Lord of the Sabbath [and can authoritatively declare what is and is not permissible on that day].

9 Now after leaving, he entered into a synagogue under control of these [Shammaiite] Pharisees.

10 A man was present who had a deformed hand, and the Pharisees asked Jesus: Is it Lawful to heal non-life-threatening disease on the days of Rest? They hoped to have something to use against him if he answered yes.

11 But Jesus replied: Which among you, if he has a sheep fall into a pit on the Sabbath, won't break the Sabbath by lifting it out [even though lifting or carrying a burden is a violation of the Sabbath laws]?

12 How much more precious is a human than a sheep? Thus, it follows that to do a good deed on the Sabbath [--like healing--] does not violate it.

13 Then he said to the man: Stretch out your hand! The man did, and it was restored whole, just like the other one.

14 [Enraged at this,] the Pharisees then went out and held a meeting, debating how to destroy Jesus.

15 But when word reached Jesus about it, he left the area and the multitudes went with him--and he healed them all.

16 He told them, however, not to spread word of what he was doing.

17 This was to fulfill a prophecy of Isaiah's:

18 **Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.**

19 **He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.**

20 **A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.**

21 **And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.**

22 Then a man who had been struck dumb and blind by a demon was brought to him, and Jesus healed this mute blind man to the extent that he could speak and see!

23 And all the people were amazed, and said: Is this not the *Messiah ben David*?!

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they responded: This man casts out demons only because Beelzebub, the Prince of demons, is enabling him to!

25 But Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said to them: Every nation divided by civil war and infighting will fall. Every city or family divided against itself will not stand.

26 If Satan is casting his own demons out, then he is at war with his own forces, so how can his kingdom possibly survive?

27 And if *my* power comes from Beelzebub, where does *your* [Pharisee movement's] power come from? [In other words, when is the last time any of *you* cast out a demon by God's power? The answer is, of course, that you *can't* cast demons out at all!] So these fleeing demons are showing

the kingdom of God is come unto you.

29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?⁵ and then he will spoil his house.

30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.⁶

33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.⁷

39 But he answered, and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.⁸

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren⁹ stood without, desiring to speak with him.

47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and

who really is, and is not, of God!

28 And if I therefore am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is apparently before you right now.

29 Otherwise, how can someone go into the house of a strong man and rob his goods unless he first overpowers and ties the man up, leaving him free to strip the house clean?

30 Anyone who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me is helping to scatter the harvest.

31 Because of this [--because you are either helping or opposing me--] I say to you that God will forgive all sorts of sin and blasphemous words. But to [knowingly denounce the redeeming power of God as Satanic] will not be forgiven men!

32 And whoever curses or speaks out against the Son of Man--it will be forgiven him. But whoever curses and opposes God's Spirit shall not find forgiveness in this Age or the next!

33 Either make the tree of your heart good, and its fruit good; or make the tree of your heart evil and its fruit evil, for the tree is revealed by its fruit.

34 O you generation of snakes! How can anyone ever hope to hear anything edifying come out of you and your movement? The mouth speaks what is in the heart [and all you have in your hearts is venom]!

35 A good man with a good heart brings forth good things, just as an evil man with an evil heart brings forth evil things as the fruit of what lives inside of him.

36 I want you to know that at the Last Judgment a man will give account for every offhand word he ever spoke.

37 For your words either will justify or condemn you!

38 Then some other Torah teachers and [Hillelite] Pharisees spoke up in response, saying: Teacher, we would see a sign from you [proving that you really speak for God].

39 But he answered them: An evil and spiritually-defiled generation wants a sign, and the only sign it will get is that of the prophet Jonah.

40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the fish's belly [and then came out], the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [and will then come out].

41 The [Gentile] men of Nineveh will rise at the resurrection and condemn this generation, for *they* all repented at Jonah's preaching--and one greater than Jonah stands before you now!

42 The Queen of Sheba [--a Gentile--] shall rise up at the Last Judgment and condemn this generation too, because she traveled all the way from Ethiopia to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and yet one greater than Solomon is here before you.

43 [Learn a lesson from demons!] When a demon is gone from a man, it wanders the deserts, hoping to find some place of rest. But finding none,

44 He says to himself, "I'll go back to the one I left!" So he returns and finds the man he once possessed cleansed from his presence.

45 Then the demon goes and finds seven demons even more wicked than himself to come and possess the man, bringing him under their total domination and making him worse off than he ever was before! I therefore warn you that this wicked generation shall be just as controlled by Satan!

46 While Jesus was talking to the people like this, his mother and brethren were outside trying to get near enough

thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.
 48 But he answered, and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?
 49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!
 50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

to speak to him.
 47 Someone told Jesus: Your mother and brethren are outside, and want to speak to you.
 48 But Jesus answered the man who told him: Who is my mother and brethren?
 49 Then he gestured toward his disciples, and said: Here is my mother and brethren!
 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, my sister, and my mother!

1. The Pharisees here are accusing the disciples of harvesting grain, which is forbidden on the Sabbath. However, in Luke 6:1's account of this event, additional information is given that the group were rolling the corn in their hands to loosen the kernels for eating. At the time, there was a dispute between the Galileans, who felt this was a technically permissible way to obtain grain to eat on the Sabbath, and the Judeans who disagreed. The Talmud (Shabbat 128a) confirms that a man may eat a few morsels of animal fodder on the Sabbath, but restricts it otherwise. Jesus here is moving past the argument over a technicality and instead teaching the greater principle that the Sabbath is not meant to enslave men to it, but rather to benefit mankind. Thus, if necessity arises for a man to profane the Sabbath in order to legitimately satisfy a physical need, God is not offended. Even the rabbis of antiquity used a similar argument to justify the concept that the reasonable needs for preserving life, along with good deeds, were permitted on the Sabbath, likewise citing David's eating the *shewbread* (Y'lomm'denu, Yalkut II, par. 130, Tosefta Shabbat 15b) to justify it! As a final note, Luke's record of the same event implies that this was actually the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
2. Referring to the fact that there is a variety of "work" (including circumcising children on the Sabbath) that the priests must do to keep the Temple running, or to fulfill other commandments, and that they are not condemned for this. The reason they aren't is that Judaism teaches that if two commandments—one negative and the other positive—conflict with each other the positive commandment takes precedence. This is why, for example, the Ark of the Covenant was decorated with two cherubim, although the Torah forbids making an image of a heavenly creature.
3. It is very likely that these are Pharisees from the school of Shammai. The Jewish Tosefta (which contains additions to the Mishna) records a difference of opinion between the two schools on praying for the sick on the Sabbath: The school of Shammai forbade this as work, whereas the school of Hillel approved of it. It thus is probable that the Pharisees who seek to find fault on Christ's healing on the Sabbath are followers of Shammai's teachings.
4. A view entirely consistent with the teachings of Hillel, as opposed to Shammai, who taught stringent obedience to the commandments above all else.
5. The "strong man" is Satan himself.
6. Here, Jesus begins to define the "Unforgivable sin" as consciously attributing to the devil the power of God. Keep in mind that at this point in time the Holy Spirit is not viewed as a separate part of the Trinity but rather as the power or inspiration of God. Thus, blaspheming the Holy Spirit in this context is not knowingly speaking against a part of the Trinity, but refers to viewing the acts and power of God, and with full knowledge that they *are* from God, denying that and attributing them to the devil. The reference to "the world to come" is not speaking of the Jewish/Catholic notions of Purgatory, but refers to the Messianic Age to come. (The word *aion*, translated as "world," is equally, and better translatable here, as "age.")
7. The change in tone from one of hostility to one of respect ("master"), and the fact that the text makes the distinction that these are "certain" of the scribes and Pharisees, suggests these are a different set of Pharisees—probably from the school of Hillel—who exhibit the stumbling block that will dog Judaism throughout the ministry of Christ: Ignoring the plain evidence before them, they demand a supernatural sign (probably a heavenly voice) to prove Jesus is the Messiah. And even this, as shown by the Talmud, is insufficient of itself to be the determining factor, for a majority vote of the Sanhedrin or the rabbis is still required for a decision to be binding, and the authority of this vote is such that it even outweighs the opinion of God, if God's opinion is contrary! (See Steinsaltz' commentary on Bava Metzia 59B.) You'll note that Jesus' answer, while not overly positive, is distinctly less hostile than his retort to the group of Shammaiites, whom He has just called "vipers."
8. This jump to the subject of demonology, apparently out of nowhere, is puzzling. The paraphrase attempts to explain it by expanding on what Jesus' point may have been.
9. Just who the "brethren" are is debatable, for there is no way to know for certain, and there are also problems with all the possibilities:

These are brothers born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus. The problem is that Jesus on the cross gives Mary over to John, who takes care of her from that point. Such an act is unthinkable if Mary has other male children. The word used (*adelphos*) however, does technically refer to brothers born to the same mother, not the same father!

These are cousins. While possibly the best answer, *suggenes* or *anepsios* would be better words to use for a cousin than *adelphos*, which, as mentioned, is more proper for an actual brother.

These are stepbrothers from an earlier marriage of Joseph. This notion was popular among early commentators, but if this is the case, a problem arises in that the birthright would have passed to one of Jesus' elder brothers. A possible reconciliation of the problem could lie in that Joseph's line alone had been disqualified from passing the birthright of the throne of David without adding to it the line from Mary (see the note in Chapter 1, verse 11 which deals with the subject). But yet another problem is that James, the "brother" of Jesus, seems too young to have been a grown man at Jesus' birth, which he would have been since Joseph begins his life with Mary apparently without any other children.

These were children of other relatives adopted by Joseph and Mary, for whatever reason, at some point after the birth of Jesus. There is no evidence to support this contention.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 13

- 1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.
- 2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto

MATTHEW CHAPTER 13

- 1 The same day, Jesus left the house he was staying at and sat down by the shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- 2 Hosts of people crowded around him, and he had to sit in

him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.
 3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;
 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:
 5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:
 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.
 7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:
 8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.
 9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.
 10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
 11 He answered, and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.
 12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.
 13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.
 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:
 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.
 17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.
 18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.
 19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.
 20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;
 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.
 22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.
 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an

a boat and speak from a few yards out in the water as the crowd stood on the shore.
 3 Much of his teaching was in telling stories with a moral, such as this one: A farmer went out to sow some seed in a field.
 4 As he cast it forth, some seeds fell outside the tilled ground and the birds ate the seeds up.
 5 Some fell on rocky ground, and they did initially grow, but they had no deep roots because of the shallow soil.
 6 When the sun got hot they withered up because their roots were so shallow.
 7 Other seeds fell into thorny weeds and were choked by thorn bushes.
 8 But some seeds fell into the tilled soil, grew, and eventually gave good fruit. Some had bountiful fruit; some had a lot of fruit; and some had a little fruit.
 9 He who is able to understand, let him understand.
 10 Later, the disciples asked him: Why do you talk to the people in stories [instead of just speaking plainly]?
 11 He answered back: Because *you* are the ones who have been appointed to hear and understand the mysteries of the Messianic Kingdom in a clear, unambiguous manner. The crowds haven't been given this privilege.
 12 [For whoever *is* able to understand will see his enlightenment continue to grow, while anyone who does *not* understand will lose what little understanding he may already have.]
 13 Thus, I speak to the crowds in stories [to illustrate that their stubbornness and spiritual blindness makes them unable to understand my words].
 14 In these people is fulfilled what Isaiah prophesied about when he said: **By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:**
 15 **For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.**
 16 But blessed are *your* eyes, for they can see, and blessed are *your* ears, for they can hear.
 17 For truly I tell you that many prophets and righteous men of history looked for the day when the things you see and hear would arrive, but they died without seeing it.
 18 So now I will tell you what this parable of the Sower meant:
 19 When anyone hears the Message of the Kingdom, but does not understand it, [the devil] comes and takes away the seed of truth that started to grow in his heart. This represents the seeds that fell on the hard ground instead of the tilled soil.
 20 The seed that fell onto rocky ground represents people who initially hear the Gospel and enthusiastically respond to it,
 21 But they have no strong commitment, and when trials or persecution arise in opposition to the Message they quickly fall away.
 22 The seed that fell into the thorn bushes are those who hear the Gospel but still make wealth and having a good life their priority, and thus they never grow any spiritual fruit in their lives because the Message is choked off by their greed.

hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered, and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and

23 The seeds that fell into the tilled soil represent people who hear and understand the Gospel, making a commitment to it. People like this always bear spiritual fruit, whether bountiful, a lot, or a little.

24 Jesus then spoke a similar parable: The Kingdom of heaven can be likened to a man who sowed good wheat seed in a field.

25 But while everyone was asleep one night, his enemy secretly came and sowed darnel [--which looks like wheat--] in the same field, then went on his way.

26 When the wheat grew and bore fruit, the darnel did likewise.

27 So the field hands came to their master, and said, "Sir, didn't you sow wheat in this field? Where did the darnel come from?"

28 He replied, "An enemy must have done this [trying to spoil the harvest]." The servants then asked, "Do you want us to go pluck up the weeds?"

29 But he said, "No--lest you pull up some of the wheat along with the weeds.

30 "Let both grow together until harvest time, then I'll tell the reapers to pull the bad plants up and tie them into bundles to be burned up. The wheat can then be gathered and stored in the granary."

31 Jesus spoke another parable: The Kingdom of heaven is likened to a single mustard seed that a man sowed in his field.

32 Even though a mustard seed is one of the smallest of all seeds, it is one of the largest herb plants, and when mature becomes a tree that birds may nest in.

33 This was yet another parable: The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman mixed into three cups of flour [until the dough grew so large it practically overflowed the bowl]!

34 All these points of spiritual truth Jesus imparted to the crowds in parables, and without using parables he did not speak.

35 So that it fulfilled what the prophet said in the Psalms: **I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.**

36 Then Jesus dismissed the crowds and went back into the house. The disciples then came to him, saying: Explain to us the story about the darnel in the wheat field.

37 He answered them: The man who sowed the good seed of wheat in the field represents me, the Son of Man.

38 The field itself is the world, and the good seed the children of God's Kingdom. The darnel are the children of [Satan, masquerading as true wheat].

39 The enemy that sowed the darnel is the devil. The harvest spoken of is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.

40 As in real life darnel is bundled up and cast into the fire, so it will be at the end of this world.

41 The Son of Man will send forth his angels to remove everything in his Kingdom that causes men to stumble, and all those who live in unrepentant sin,

42 And they shall be cast into the furnace of hell's fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 After that, the righteous shall shine as bright as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. If anyone can understand--then understand!

44 Again, the Kingdom of heaven is also like a pot of gold

selleseth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.
 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:
 46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.
 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:
 48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.
 49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,
 50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
 51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.
 52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.
 53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.
 54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?
 55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?
 56 And his sisters¹, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?
 57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.
 58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

buried in a field that a man happened to stumble upon. Elated, he reburied the gold and sold everything he owned to buy the field and keep the treasure.
 45 It's also like a jeweler who sought quality pearls,
 46 Who--when he found a flawless pearl of utter perfection--sold everything he had to acquire it.
 47 The Kingdom of heaven is also like a net that was cast into the ocean, and gathered up a wide variety of fish.
 48 When it was full, they drew the net to shore and began sorting the catch, tossing the good fish into baskets while throwing the bad fish away.
 49 It will be likewise at the end of the world: The angels shall come out and separate the bad men from the good,
 50 And will cast the bad into the furnace of hell's fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
 51 Jesus asked: Have you understood what I have been teaching in all this? The disciples answered: Yes, we have, Lord.
 52 Jesus said: Every Torah teacher who adds my teachings to the knowledge he already has about God's Kingdom is like a man with a warehouse in which are stored precious commodities both old *and* new.
 53 After Jesus had finished these parables, he left the area.
 54 When he returned to Nazareth, he taught at the synagogue and everyone was astounded, asking: Where did this man get all this ability to preach? And what about these miracles they say he does?
 55 Isn't he the same Jesus whose father was a carpenter [or stone mason]? Isn't his mother named Miriam, and doesn't he have kinsmen here--James, Joses, Simon, and Jude?
 56 Don't his sisters live hereabouts? So how did he gain such knowledge, ability, and notoriety?
 57 And they were offended [at his presumption to speak with such apparent authority]. Jesus noted: A prophet is honored everywhere but in his own town amongst his own acquaintances and family.
 58. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

1. Now we have mention of Jesus' sisters. As these women are mentioned at all (an oddity for the culture), the most reasonable belief is that they are literally the children of Mary and Joseph.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 14

1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,
 2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.¹
 3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.
 4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.
 5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.
 6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias² danced before them, and pleased Herod.
 7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.
 8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.
 9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's

MATTHEW CHAPTER 14

1 It was about this time that Herod Antipas heard the commotion about Jesus,
 2 And he said to his staff: This must be John the Baptist risen from the dead, and that's why such miracles are coming forth from him!
 3 For Herod had chained and imprisoned John earlier because the Baptist had denounced him for marrying Herodias, his brother Philip's wife [after the woman used Roman law to divorce her husband].
 4 John pointed out: The Law of Moses does not permit a man to marry a woman who divorces her husband through Gentile law!
 5 Though Herod would have silenced John for good, he was afraid of sparking a revolution because the multitude revered the Baptist as a prophet.
 6 But when Herod was celebrating his birthday, Salome, the daughter of his wife Herodias [and Salome's uncle Boethus/Philip] did an erotic dance that pleased Herod,
 7 Who blurted out a vow that he would give her anything she asked for.

sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.
 10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.
 11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.
 12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went, and told Jesus.
 13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.
 14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.
 15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.
 16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.
 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.
 18 He said, Bring them hither to me.
 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.
 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.
 22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.
 23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.
 24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.
 25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.
 26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.
 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.
 28 And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.³
 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.
 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.
 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?⁴
 32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.
 33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.⁵

8 Having been instructed earlier on what to say by her mother, she told Herod: Give me John the Baptizer's head on a platter!
 9 Herod was immediately sorry for his blunder, but to keep from losing face before his court as they dined with him, he did as she asked, and commanded John's head be brought and given to the girl.
 10 So he had John's head cut off down in the dungeon.
 11 His head was brought to court on a platter and given to the adolescent girl, who passed it on to her mother.
 12 John's disciples came for his body and then buried it. Afterward, they came, and told Jesus what had happened.
 13 When Jesus heard that John was dead, he took a boat to an isolated spot, but the people heard about it and left the cities to walk to where he was.
 14 Going forth, Jesus saw the host of desperate people, and compassionately healed their sick.
 15 As the sun was going down, the disciples came to him, and said: It's getting late and this is a wilderness. Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the local villages and buy food.
 16 But Jesus replied: They need not leave--*you* feed them!
 17 They said back: But we have only five barley loaves, and a couple of fish!
 18 Jesus said: Bring them over to me.
 19 Then Jesus had the crowd sit in the field, and he took up the five loaves and two fish. Looking up to heaven, he then blessed God and broke the loaves up, distributing the pieces to the disciples who, in turn, handed them out to the people.
 20 There was enough for all, and everyone ate until they were full. The leftovers even filled twelve baskets!
 21 The crowd numbered five thousand men, not counting women and children!
 22 Just after this, Jesus had the disciples depart by boat while he sent the crowds away.
 23 After dismissing the crowds, Jesus went up alone onto a mountain to pray for part of the night.
 24 But a storm was arising and the boat with the disciples was having a hard time on the Sea of Galilee, for the wind was against them.
 25 Around 3 AM, Jesus came out to the boat, walking upon the water!
 26 When the disciples saw this, they panicked and screamed out in fear: It's a ghost!
 27 But Jesus immediately shouted to them: Don't worry--it's me, so don't be afraid!
 28 Peter shouted back: Lord, if it's *really* you, bid me to come walk out on the water to you!
 29 Jesus said: Come on then! So Peter swung his legs over the side of the boat and began to walk out to Jesus.
 30 But when he saw how powerful the shrieking wind was, it caused him to become afraid, he started to sink down into the waves and cried out: Lord, save me!
 31 Instantly, Jesus came and pulled him back up, saying: O you man of little faith! Why did you stop believing, and let doubt defeat you?
 32 When they got back to the ship, the wind ceased.
 33 Then those aboard the ship did obeisance, and said: Of a truth, you *are* [the Messiah and king of Israel]!
 34 When they reached shore, they were again in the land of Gennesaret.

34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.
35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;
36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.⁶

35 This time, when people thereabouts found out, everyone brought the sick and diseased.
36 And these came, wanting just to touch the tassels of his prayer shawl, and everyone who did that was completely healed and restored to vigor.

1. A verse confirming that the greater ministry of Jesus, in which His miracle power is displayed on a grand scale, was very brief in length, for apparently Herod hasn't heard of Him before John was martyred. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 2:22:5) claimed that Jesus' ministry only lasted a year from His baptism, which would jibe with the parable in Luke 13:8.
2. Whose name was Salome, the product of an earlier marriage of Herodias to her own uncle Philip (actually named Boethus), the brother of Antipas. The Torah did not forbid marrying an uncle; John's complaint is based on Herodias using Roman law to get a divorce. By the way, Salome was an adolescent, not a seductive teenager. (See the commentary for Mark 6:22.)
3. The first example of Peter's talking without thinking.
4. There is actually a double miracle here. Peter walks upon the water twice--the second time, after starting to sink.
5. Meaning the Messiah.
6. As mentioned before, this would be touching the fringes representing the 613 commandments.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 15

1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.¹
3 But he answered, and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?
4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.
5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;
6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus, have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.²
7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,
8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.
9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.³
10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:
11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.⁴
12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?⁵
13 But he answered, and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.⁶
14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.
15 Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.
16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?
17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out

MATTHEW CHAPTER 15

1 Then some Pharisees and Torah teachers from Jerusalem [--who followed the teachings and traditions of Shammai--] came up to Jesus, saying:
2 Why do your disciples transgress rabbinic tradition by not performing the ceremonial hand washing before they eat bread?!
3 But Jesus shot back: Why do you transgress the commandments of God with your rabbinic tradition?
4 For God commanded: *See to the needs of your father and mother*; and, *Anyone who curses his father or mother must be stoned*.
5 But your oral rulings on the Law say: *If a man donates his money and goods to the Temple [remaining only an overseer of them],*
6 *He is absolved from the responsibility of using his resources to aid his parents if they need it.* Thus, the commandment [--which is far more important than your traditions--] is nullified.
7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:
8 **This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.**
9 **But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**
10 Jesus then called the multitude, and said: Listen and understand!
11 [It's not things like eating food that isn't prepared according to strict rabbinic requirements, or eating without first saying this prayer or that, which *really* defile a person!] What defiles a person is what comes *out* of him, not what goes *into* him!
12 Then the disciples came up, and said: Don't you realize the Pharisees were offended when they heard you say those things?
13 But Jesus answered: Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be plucked up by the roots!
14 Let those Pharisees be--they are blind leaders leading blind followers, and when the blind lead the blind they both fall into a ditch.
15 Then Peter spoke to Jesus, saying: Tell us what you meant by what really defiles a person.

into the draught?

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

24 But he answered, and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.⁷

25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

26 But he answered, and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.⁸

27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

28 Then Jesus answered, and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:

31 Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.

38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

39 And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.⁹

16 Jesus replied: Do you all still lack understanding?

17 Do you not comprehend by now that anything you eat passes through your body and eventually goes out into the sewer?

18 But the words that come out of a man are from what lives in his heart--and it's the *words* someone speaks that can make a man impure in God's eyes.

19 For it's from the heart that evil thoughts, murder, sexual sin, thievery, lies, and blasphemous speech come--

20 And these are what really make a man impure. But to eat without saying a blessing and performing a ritual hand washing does not make a man impure.

21 Then Jesus departed into the area of Tyre and Sidon.

22 There, a Canaanite woman followed after Jesus, crying out: Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! A demon has grievously vexed my little girl!

23 Jesus ignored her, but eventually the disciples became irritated with her and urged Jesus, saying: Tell her to get lost--she's driving us crazy by following along, begging us!

24 So Jesus answered the woman, and said: I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel [and not to the Gentiles].

25 Then the woman fell down in obeisance at Jesus' feet, and begged: Lord, help me!

26 But Jesus answered: It is not appropriate to take the children's food and toss it to the puppies to eat.

27 She said in response: That may be true, Lord--but even the puppies are fed a few scraps from their master's table!

28 Then Jesus answered: O woman, you have great faith! Let your request be granted. And the woman's daughter was made whole from that very hour.

29 Jesus then left the area and returned to the Sea of Galilee where he selected a mountain to sit at.

30 Great multitudes of people came to him with the lame, the blind, the mute, the maimed, and many others that they laid at Jesus' feet; and he healed them.

31 He healed so many that the multitudes were amazed at seeing mute people speak, maimed people with their limbs back, lame people walking, and blind people recovering their sight. And they glorified the God of Israel.

32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him, and told them: I am worried for the people because they have been with me for three days without food. I don't want to send them away hungry, lest they get sick on the way home.

33 The disciples answered: Where would we get enough bread out here in the wilderness to feed so many?

34 Jesus asked: How many loaves have you? They answered: Seven, and some small fish.

35 So Jesus commanded the people to sit down.

36 Then he took the loaves and fish, blessed God, then handed them out to the disciples who took the food to the people.

37 And everyone ate until they were full, and they had seven basketfuls left over!

38 *This* crowd consisted of four thousand men, not counting women and children!

39 After Jesus sent the crowds away, he got in a boat and went to [the notorious city of] Magdala, and the region around it.

1. Once again, we can know these are Pharisees from the school of Shammai by this statement and Jesus' reply! The notion of ritually washing the hands before taking up a cup of wine and breaking bread traces itself to one of Shammai's 18 edicts, and will be detailed in the commentary under Luke 11. Jesus' reply, which includes rebuking these same Pharisees for dedicating their goods to the Temple as a means of absolving them from seeing to the needs of their parents, is a direct assault against a practice followed by the Shammaiites that even the followers of Hillel criticized them for.
2. Aged fathers would sometimes give their sons their inheritances while still alive. Some of the more hypocritical Pharisees of both groups may have gone through the process of dedicating their goods to the Temple to avoid the responsibility of seeing to the needs of their parents until they died, whereupon they went through the absolution process to negate the vow and retrieve the property.
3. A criticism against the *takkanot* of the Pharisees: Extraneous ritual religious laws with no true Scriptural basis imposed on the people to legislate piety on threat of damnation or excommunication. At least some correlation can be made with some of the extra-biblical doctrines of the Catholic or Orthodox Churches: Abstaining from meat on Fridays, fasting during Lent, forbidding priests to marry, etc. Some modern-day Protestant denominations are equally guilty, forbidding women to wear pants, or requiring men to have hair of a legalistically approved short length as two examples.
4. Meaning that the words a man speaks out of the treasure of his heart are what defile him in God's eyes as Jesus goes on to explain.
5. The disciples are justifiably concerned, for these are the leaders of the nation with the authority to approve or reject the ministry of Christ on not just a personal level, but also an official one.
6. An interesting verse, probably with a double meaning: Jesus first of all is referring to the school of Shammai itself, which officially did fall from its position of leading the Pharisee movement in 70 AD after a heavenly voice called upon the rabbis to acknowledge the teachings of Hillel over Shammai in matters of doctrine. Secondly, Jesus is referring to the Pharisee movement as a whole--for, as shown in Luke 7:30, the Pharisees rejected the plan God actually had intended for them by rejecting John's ministry even before rejecting Jesus' ministry. While the movement exists to this day in the form of rabbinic Judaism, ultimately Judaism based on the Pharisaic (Talmudic) teachings of those who rejected Christ will be overturned by Christ in the Messianic Age.
7. The Gospel must first be preached to the Jews, and only after they reject it (on an official level by the religious leaders) may it go forth equally to the Gentiles.
8. Not as strong an insult as it seems. The word is better understood as "puppies."
9. Although not mentioned, it is probably at this point that Mary Magdalene joins the group. The claim that she was a prostitute is based on no evidence other than tradition, and the fact that Magdala* was known to be a large center of prostitution catering to the Romans in nearby Tiberius--a city that the Jews avoided because of a cemetery within it that caused ritual defilement.

* It should be noted that there were also other cities named Magdala in Israel.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 16

1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.¹

2 He answered, and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.

3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.

8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of

MATTHEW CHAPTER 16

1 The Pharisees, now joined by some Sadducee priests from the Temple, approached Jesus, challenging him to show a sign from heaven [to prove his legitimacy].

2 He answered them: If the sky at sundown is red, you say there will be good weather the next morning.

3 If it's red and overcast at dawn, you say the weather will be bad. You hypocrites! You can read the signs in the sky to know what is in store, but are you so utterly incapable of understanding the signs of the *times* you're in?

4 A perverted and spiritually-defiled generation wants a sign. Well, the only sign you will get is the sign of the prophet Jonah! Having spoken, Jesus then got in a boat, and departed.

5 When they reached the other side of the lake the disciples realized they had forgotten to bring bread with them.

6 Then Jesus noted: Watch out! Beware of bread yeasted by either the Pharisees or the Sadducees!

7 The disciples didn't understand, and assumed Jesus was making some comment about bread *baked* by Pharisees or Sadducees, so they muttered among themselves: He said that because we forgot to bring bread with us.

8 When Jesus realized that, he told them: O you men of little faith--why are you muttering among yourselves like I'm talking about food?

9 Do you not understand and recall how I fed five thousand people with five loaves, and how many baskets of leftovers you collected afterwards?

10 Did you forget the seven loaves that fed four thousand, and how many baskets you collected from *that*?

11 How then can you think I'm referring to baked bread when I warn you about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees?

the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.²
 13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
 16 And Simon Peter answered, and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 17 And Jesus answered, and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.³
 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.⁴
 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.
 21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.
 22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.
 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan⁵: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.
 24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
 27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.
 28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.⁶

12 Then they understood that Jesus was not warning about normal bread yeast, but the spiritual yeast of the doctrines both these groups held.
 13 Later, when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked the disciples: Who are the people saying that I, the Son of Man, am?
 14 They responded: Some think you're John the Baptist; others think you must be Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other ancient prophets returned to the earth.
 15 He said to them: But what do *you* say about who I am?
 16 Shimon Peter spoke up, saying: You are the Messiah--Son of the living God!
 17 Jesus answered Peter: Blessed are you, Shimon, son of Jonah, for no one told you this, nor did you figure it out on your own--but my Father in heaven gave you this revelation!
 18 And I also say to you, that you are Peter [--a rock--] and upon this rock I will erect my church, and the gates of death [will neither stop me, nor will they overcome the church I build]!
 19 And I will give to you first [--not to the Pharisees or Sadducees--] the keys of authority over the Messianic Kingdom in matters of church discipline and doctrine. Whatever *you* permit shall be permitted, and whatever *you* deny shall be denied.
 20 Then he charged the disciples to tell no one he was affirming that he was Jesus the Messiah.
 21 From that point, Jesus now began warning the disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer badly at the hands of the religious leaders, the chief priests, and the Torah teachers--and that he would die, rising again on the third day.
 22 Then Peter took him aside and began sharply rebuking him, saying: God forbid, Lord--this will not happen to you!
 23 But he turned his back to Peter and said: Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me because you are not thinking God's way, but man's!
 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples: If any man wants to be my follower, let him deny his own wants and wishes and take up the cross of following mine.
 25 For whoever saves his life will lose it in the end, and whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it in the end.
 26 For what is the good of gaining everything on earth only to lose your soul in hell? Or, what price can a man put on his immortal soul?
 27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father and His angels; and he will give every man what is coming to him, be it reward or punishment, **according to his works**.
 28 And truly I say to you that there are some here who will not die until they glimpse the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom!

1. Again, the elders desire to hear a "heavenly voice." Also, whether verses 2 and 3 were in the original Gospel is debated.

2. How much of the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees that constituted "**leaven**" is hard to know for certain. In the case of the Sadducees, their false beliefs were widespread: Denial of a Messiah, denial of a resurrection, rejection of all the books of the Bible except for the five books of Moses, etc. Conversely, the best of the Pharisees' core beliefs were not vastly different from the teachings of Christ, but were distorted and polluted by a lack of true love, their covetousness, and their belief that the path to experiencing and becoming pleasing to God was not through faith, love, and self-sacrifice, but through obeying commandments and observing religious ritual.

3. Here, of course, is the verse that causes so much controversy between Catholicism and Protestantism. What is Jesus saying?

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter...

Jesus first of all renames Peter from Shimon (a reed) to Kepha (stone).

...and upon this rock I will build my church...

In Aramaic, the word *kepha* is directly used for “rock,” but one meaning it also has in the culture is as a statement of fact, or a proclamation. Thus, most evangelicals hold that Jesus is saying that His church will be built upon the foundation of Peter’s revelation that Christ is the Messiah, “**the Son of the Living God**.” Catholics agree (canon 424), but also believe that Jesus was referring to Peter personally. Now while the statement to this point could indeed be understood as referring to Peter personally as the rock upon which Christ will build...

...and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

This last part of the verse could suggest that the statement is to be understood as referring to resurrection. The word used here for “hell” is *Hades* (from the Hebrew *Sheol*), the abode of the dead, not *Gehenna*, the flames of hell as we think of them. The translation in English therefore leaves us with a bit of a misconception of what’s really being referred to, since it’s the grave, and not perdition, that Christ is speaking of. Thus, if the subject of the verse is less Peter, and more Jesus Himself, then in the last part of the verse, Jesus is actually prophesying that He (and by extension the church) will not be prevailed against by the “gates” of death and the grave. This notion is certainly one possible understanding of Christ’s words given the fact that some theologians believe that the “rock” Jesus says He will build on is not necessarily Peter’s profession of faith, but rather Jesus Himself, who is the “chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). Some theologians, by the way (Maximus of Turin, for one), viewed this as referring to Believers not being held by the grave, and how obviously would Jesus be the first example as I suggest?

But most of Protestantism, as noted, holds that Jesus is saying: “**Upon this rock** (Peter’s profession of faith) **I shall build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it** (my church). That is certainly the most natural understanding of His words, and in ancient times the gates of a city were where judges often held court and exercised authority. Thus, the “gates” would be speaking of the authority of the demonic realm that would not be able to “prevail” (meaning to overcome or overpower) against the church Christ has established. It’s not impossible that the verse may actually have been intended by Jesus to have more than one meaning, for all the views of the verse I’ve noted are all equally true.

4. Jesus here is referring to matters of church discipline, declaring that Peter (“thee” is singular), but later all the apostles, according to Matt. 18:18, will have the authority to determine *halakhot*—that is, to make decisions in His name regarding the operation of the church and clarification to the peripheral beliefs that will fall within the core essentials of truth He has already been teaching. An example is the ruling by the council of Acts 15 that permitted Gentiles to enter the church without converting to Judaism.

5. Jesus may be drawing on an ancient Jewish folktale in which Satan caused a river to try to hold back Abraham from taking Isaac to the place of sacrifice, which Abraham rebuked to continue moving forward. He may also be employing the word “Satan” in its normal Hebrew usage—that of an adversary, and so he would be telling Peter to “fall in line behind” with what he needs to do; or Christ may be rebuking Peter for speaking the will of the devil in trying to oppose His predetermined destiny.

6. Probably not referring to the next episode in which Jesus is transfigured, but to possibly John’s eventual vision of the Second Coming in the Book of Revelation. Others would hold that this prophecy came to pass on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 17

1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses¹ and Elias talking with him.
4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.²
6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.
7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.
8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.
9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.³
10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?⁴
11 And Jesus answered, and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.⁵
12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever

MATTHEW CHAPTER 17

1 Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John apart from the other disciples to a high mountain.
2 Then Jesus was transfigured before their eyes, his face shining like the sun and his clothing like pure white light!
3 Moses and Elijah then appeared and began speaking with him.
4 Peter cried out to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here! If you want us to, let us go build three shelters—one for you, Moses, and Elijah—to stay in!
5 While he was speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice spoke out of it that said: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. All of you heed what he says!
6 At hearing the voice, the disciples fell face down on the ground, cringing in terror.
7 Then Jesus came over and touched them, saying: Get up, and don’t be afraid.
8 When they looked up, the vision was gone and they saw only Jesus.
9 As they descended the mountain, Jesus commanded: Don’t tell anyone about this vision until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.
10 His disciples asked him: Why then do the Torah teachers say Elijah must come back to earth [before the Messiah appears and sets up the Kingdom]?
11 Jesus answered: Elijah will indeed come and restore all things [to set the stage for this].
12 But I point out that he already came, but they

they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.
 13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.
 14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,
 15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.
 16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.
 17 Then Jesus answered, and said⁶, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.
 18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.
 19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?
 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.⁷
 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.⁸
 22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:
 23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.
 24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?
 25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?
 26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.
 27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.⁹

didn't realize it, and did to him as they wished. Likewise, the Son of Man will suffer at their hands.
 13 Then the disciples realized he was speaking of John the Baptist.
 14 When they returned to the waiting multitudes, a certain man came and knelt down to him, saying:
 15 Lord, have mercy on my son. He is vexed [with epileptic fits], often falling down onto the fire or into the water.
 16 I brought him to your disciples but they couldn't cure him.
 17 Then Jesus answered, and said: O faithless and perverse generation--how long do you think I will be here with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring the boy over to me!
 18 Jesus then rebuked the demon, which left, and the child was cured right then!
 19 Later, the disciples came to Jesus without the crowds, and asked: Why couldn't we cast it out?
 20 Jesus replied: Because you didn't have faith. I tell you truly, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you could even say to this mountain here, "Up and go elsewhere," and it would do as you say, for nothing is impossible to those with faith.
 21 Even so, this demon is the sort that will not go unless the one casting him out has been spending time in intense prayer [and fasting].
 22 Now while they were staying in the region of Galilee, Jesus told them: The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of men.
 23 They shall kill him, and on the third day he will be raised up again. Hearing this, the disciples were very grieved at these words.
 24 When they reached Capernaum, representatives of the Temple, who collected the yearly head tax, came to Peter, and said: Doesn't your teacher pay the tax?
 25 Peter said: Yes, he does. Now when he was coming into the house, Jesus stopped him, saying: What do you think, Shimon? Whom do the kings of the earth collect taxes from--their own children, or strangers?
 26 Peter answered: From strangers! So Jesus said: Then the children are the ones who are free from debt!
 27 But so that we don't offend them, go out to the lake and cast out a hook, and the first fish you catch will have a coin in its mouth. Use it to pay our tax to them.

1. Right here, the Sadducee-like belief of teachers who deny the immortality of the soul is overturned, for Moses, long dead, comes to speak with Jesus together with Elijah. This fact also demolishes the doctrine of "Soul sleep," since Moses' spirit is seen.

2. This is the *Bat Kol*, the heavenly voice the religious leaders constantly demand of Jesus to prove His legitimacy.

3. What a test of obedience! Keeping the fact from the rest of their friends that the group had actually seen Moses and Elijah must have required extraordinary obedience and self-control.

4. The apostles understand that the prophet Elijah must come to earth to prepare the way for the Messiah (Malachi 4:5), and question Jesus on the subject.

5. Jesus here may be saying that Elijah will *literally* return during the events of the tribulation as one of the two witnesses of Rev.

11. But for the present, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit of Elijah, has fulfilled the role of Elijah.

6. This rebuke is directed toward the apostles.

7. A debate rages on how literal Jesus is being here. Many theologians mock those within the Faith movement for taking this verse literally, but these are the words of Christ, and unless He was wildly exaggerating, there must be a core truth here that sufficient faith can accomplish the miraculous. Paul, in 1 Cor. 13:2, seems to admit one theoretically could move a mountain if he had enough faith (although love is far more important). There is also a 'gift' of faith in 1 Cor. 12:9, presumably as a tool to manifest the power of God in a supernatural manner. Finally, there is an ancient tradition in Egypt that a Christian literally moved a mountain through his faith, and thus proved the reality of the power of God and faith in Christ.

8. Jesus is teaching that the power of some demons is such that one's authority to cast them out must be reinforced by sufficient faith. Based on the word here for *unbelief*, which means a lack of confidence, the apostles saw this demon causing the boy to contort and froth at the mouth, and they may have thought it might be too powerful to cast out, but they'd try it anyway. That, or they may

have been afraid of it. With such weak faith, they failed. A lifestyle of prayer is thus shown by Christ to be the means of keeping one insulated from the cancer of doubt and unbelief. Note that the reference to fasting is commonly thought to be an addition from later centuries, although it is a good idea in any event. The 2nd century *Diatesseron*, however, has “fasting” in its text here.

9. The coin found was a *tetradrachm*, equivalent to a Jewish shekel, which was sufficient to pay the Temple tax for two people. If indeed that tax spoken of is the yearly Temple tax, Jesus here is showing that He agrees with the Essenes that such a tax should be paid once in a lifetime, not yearly—but to keep from showing a rebellious example, He and Peter pay it. As a point of interest, tradition dubs the *tilapia*, also known as *St. Peter's fish* as the creature that provided the tax payment. This Galilean fish carries its young around in its mouth, and is known to pick up shiny objects as a means of weaning its young away from it.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 18

1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?¹
 2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,
 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
 5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.
 6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.
 7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!
 8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.
 9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.
 10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.²
 11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.
 12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?
 13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.
 14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.
 15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.
 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.³
 18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.⁴
 19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree

MATTHEW CHAPTER 18

1 While they were there in Galilee, the disciples asked Jesus: Who [of us] is the most important in the Kingdom of heaven?
 2 In response, Jesus called a small child to him and set him in their midst.
 3 He said: I assure you that if you do not change your way of thinking, and become like little children [—who could care less about such things—] you won't even enter the Kingdom of heaven!
 4 Whoever humbles himself like this small child is truly the greatest person in the Kingdom of heaven.
 5 And anyone who receives one such child as my representative is receiving me as well.
 6 But whoever causes a child who believes in me to stumble would be luckier to have an [anchor] tied to his neck, and to be thrown into the sea to drown.
 7 Woe to world because of its offenses. Life is full of trials and temptations, but the one who is the cause of it will pay!
 8 So again: If your hand or foot causes you to stumble into sin, cut them off and throw them away, for it is better to enter into life crippled or maimed than to be cast into eternal hellfire with all your limbs.
 9 Likewise, if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away, for it is better to enter into life with one eye than to be cast into eternal hellfire with two eyes.
 10 Take heed that you don't scorn children [—as is common in our society, including new converts who are also called “children”—] for I assure you that their guardian angels always have access to my Father in heaven [and may bring charge against you for this].
 11 You see, the Son of Man came to save those who are lost.
 12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one wanders off, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine others who are fine, and head into the mountains to find the stray?
 13 And if he does find it, he rejoices more over it than he does over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.
 14 Even so, it is the will of your Father in heaven that not one of these children perish.
 15 Moreover, if your brother commits wrong against you, speak to him alone about it. If he hears you, you are reconciled.
 16 But if he rejects you, take one or two others with you [since the Torah says that two or three witnesses are accepted to establish a fact in court].
 17 If he ignores them too, bring your case before the church, and if the church agrees with you and he still refuses to repent—treat him like a pagan or a tax collector!
 18 Truly I say that you [have the right to make binding decisions regarding matters of the church].

on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.⁵ 21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. 23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came, and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.⁶

19 Again, if two of you on earth agree on something, your request shall be granted by my Father in heaven. 20 [For where two or three of my representatives meet, regarding an issue, my authority is there with them.] 21 Then Peter came to him and asked: Lord, just how many times must I forgive my brother? Is seven times enough? 22 Jesus answered: You should forgive not just *seven* times, but *seventy* times seven times! 23 I say that because the Messianic Kingdom can be likened to a king who called some of his servants to account for money they owed him. 24 When he started the accounting, a man was brought forth who owed him a million dollars. 25 But since the man was broke, the king ordered everything that man owned to be sold. Then he ordered the man and his family sold off as slaves. 26 Hearing this, the servant fell on his face pleading: "Lord—be merciful, and give me more time. I'll pay you all that I owe!" 27 The king was so moved with compassion that he unshackled him and forgave the debt altogether. 28 But that same servant went out and found another servant who owed *him* ten dollars, and he grabbed the man by the throat, saying, "Pay what you owe me!" 29 His fellow servant fell at his feet and cried out: "Have patience with me, and I'll pay you every cent!" 30 But the man wouldn't listen, and had his fellow servant tossed into Debtor's Prison, where he would stay until the debt was somehow paid off. 31 Other servants were very grieved at seeing this, and they went, and told the king what had happened. 32 Then the king called that man back, and said to him: "You evil servant! I had mercy on you and forgave the whole of your debt because you begged for mercy! 33 "Shouldn't you have had the same compassion on the man who owed you money as I had for you?!" 34 So the king angrily handed the man over to be tortured until such time as he could find some way to pay off the million dollars that he owed [from behind bars]. 35 So will my heavenly Father do to you if you do not fully and sincerely forgive every brother who sins against you.

1. Interestingly, the Gospels record numerous instances of the apostles arguing over which of them is the most important. Even at the Last Supper, as Jesus is about to be betrayed and crucified, the twelve get into an argument over who loves Jesus more, and whom is most important of the group.

2. A verse clearly showing that angels play a part in intercession for believers. Protestants who rebuke Catholics and Eastern Orthodox for the questionable idea of praying to dead saints for intercession should bear in mind that since *angels* can be shown to intercede for humanity, the idea of dead saints doing so, while not really substantiated in Scripture,* is only one step beyond what Scripture *does* show.

* The practice also exists somewhat in Judaism, for Jewish women over the centuries have been known to pray at Rachel's tomb, for instance, asking her to intercede with God for them in hope of getting pregnant.

3. An interesting verse. While Jesus has just outlined several attempts to be reconciled to one's brother before treating him as a heathen (meaning to break fellowship with him), in verse 22 He goes on to show that forgiveness is to be granted at any possible opportunity. However, Luke 17:3 suggests that this unlimited forgiveness is based upon the offender's repenting.

4. As in Matt. 16:19, this often-misunderstood verse has nothing whatever to do with binding the devil or loosing angels, prosperity, etc. "**Binding**" and "**loosing**" were rabbinic terms dealing with making *halakhic* decisions and clarifications regarding the operation of the church. Jesus is saying that the apostles have the right to guide the Christian faith in matters of church discipline, and to interpret Scripture authoritatively for the faith. An example of *Jewish* usage of the terms can be seen in these quotes from the Talmud:

They do not send letters by the hand of a heathen on the eve of a Sabbath, no, nor on the fifth day of the week. Yea, the school

of Shammai binds it, even on the fourth day of the week; but the school of Hillel looseth it.

Concerning the moving of empty vessels (on the Sabbath), of the filling of which there is no intention; the school of Shammai binds it, the school of Hillel looseth it.

Concerning gathering wood on a feast-day scattered about a field, the school of Shammai binds it, the school of Hillel looseth it.

5. Again, misunderstood to be some sort of reference to Jesus being 'with' two or three member of the laity who run into each other on the street and perhaps pray or worship together. On some level that is doubtless true, but the direct context here ties in with verse 18 on deciding matters of church discipline, and refers to the authority of a *beit din* (a quorum of 3 leaders--or perhaps the authority of the President of the synagogue and the *Chazan*, or chief elder--of the synagogue having the right to make decisions for that synagogue). As to the preceding verse which talks about God granting requests made in prayer, insufficient details are given to fully explain and clarify on what level this refers to: personal and/or corporate.

6. The verse seems to suggest that if we do not forgive the wrongs done us, God may "unforgive" sins He has previously forgiven us for! Also, see the commentary for Acts 7:10 for more information.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 19

1 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;
2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.
3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?¹
4 And he answered, and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,
5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?
6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.
7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement², and to put her away?
8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.
9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another³, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.⁴
10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.
11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.
12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.
13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.
14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.
15 And he laid his hands on them⁵, and departed thence.
16 And, behold, one came, and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?⁶

MATTHEW CHAPTER 19

1 Now after Jesus had finished these teachings he left Galilee and headed into northern Judea beyond Jordan [where he made camp].
2 Hosts of people followed, and he healed them there.
3 Some Pharisees [who followed Hillel's teachings on divorce] also came and challenged him on the subject, asking: Do you agree that the Law of Moses permits an easy divorce if a man believes he has a good reason?
4 Jesus answered: Have you not read that God in the beginning made them male and female,
5 And said, *Because of this, a man shall leave his parents and cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh?*
6 Thus, they are no longer two individuals, but one flesh in God's eyes. It is not for man, at his own whim, to thereafter break up a covenantal relationship recognized by God.
7 They answered: Well, then why did Moses allow a man to write up a Bill of Divorce, and put his wife away?
8 Jesus replied: Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because of your hard hearts [--but it was not in God's original plan].
9 So I want you to know that a man who divorces his wife for any reason other than for adultery--and then marries someone else--stands guilty of adultery; and the divorced woman will cause anyone she subsequently marries to be guilty of adultery as well.
10 The disciples concluded after hearing this: If that's how things are between a married couple, it's better to stay single!
11 But Jesus answered: [Not everyone is given the grace to be able to live a celibate lifestyle.]
12 For some are born to be celibate for physical reasons, some become eunuchs or are denied wives in order to serve a master, and some make the choice of celibacy to devote themselves wholly to God and the furtherance of His Kingdom. Whoever can live in that state should do so.
13 Then some mothers brought small children to him to lay hands on and pray over, but the disciples complained, and tried to stop it.
14 But Jesus said: Let the little children come, and don't stop them--for the Kingdom of heaven is made up of children!
15 So Jesus laid hands on them [and blessed them]. Then he departed.
16 At one point, someone came up, asking: Good Master, what good thing must I do to be absolutely sure

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.
 18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,
 19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
 20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?
 21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.
 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.
 23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.
 24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle⁷, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
 25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?
 26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.
 27 Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?
 28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
 29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.
 30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

of having eternal life?
 17 Jesus replied: Why would you call any man “good”? Only God is good. But to answer your question, if you would enter into eternal life, keep the commandments.
 18 The man then asked: Which commandments do I have to keep? Jesus replied: Don’t murder; don’t commit adultery; don’t steal or kidnap for ransom; don’t lie about others;
 19 Honor and take care of your parents; and love your neighbor as you do yourself.
 20 The young man said in response: I’ve done all these from my youth. What am I missing?
 21 Jesus replied: Since you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give it to the poor, storing up treasure in heaven; then come, and follow me.
 22 But when the young man heard that, he was very disturbed and left in sorrow since he was extremely wealthy [and could not let go of his possessions].
 23 Then Jesus told the disciples: I tell you truly that a rich man shall enter heaven only with great difficulty.
 24 I say it again—it is easier for a rope to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.
 25 When the disciples heard that, they were dumbfounded [because the rich are thought by many to be favored by God], so they asked: Who can be saved then?
 26 Jesus looked over, saying: With men, this is impossible—but with God all things are possible.
 27 Then Peter spoke up, and said to him: Look at us—we’ve given up everything to follow you. What will be our reward?
 28 Jesus answered: Truly I say that you who have followed me—when everything is re-created, and the Son of Man sits upon his throne of glory in the Messianic Kingdom—will sit on twelve thrones with me, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
 29 And everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, parents, children or lands for the sake of following me shall receive them back a hundredfold, *and* inherit everlasting life.
 30 But many who are great and important in this life shall be insignificant in the next; and many who are insignificant in this life shall be great and important in the next.

1. This is an interesting event showing a rare episode where Pharisees from the school of Hillel come to ‘tempt’ Christ with a loaded question. As has been pointed out, the school of Shammai was very strict on divorce, whereas the school of Hillel was very liberal. It seems clear from verse 7 that these are Hillelites appealing to Mosaic Law to justify their liberality toward divorce. Even so, note that Jesus is tempered in His remarks, omitting the sharp rebukes He repeatedly directs toward the Shammaiites.

2. A *Sefer Keritut* or *Get*.

3. Best understood as saying that a man who divorces his wife so he can marry someone else is guilty of adultery.

4. This is a hard verse. In the strictest sense, Jesus seems to be saying that someone who marries a divorced woman is committing adultery. However, since Jesus Himself grants leave to divorce on the grounds of adultery (reiterated by Paul, who adds abandonment to the list), remarriage is permitted in some cases, and so He may be limiting the adultery to marrying a woman who has been “**put away**” under the liberal laws allowed by the school of Hillel at that time, which were so loose as to permit divorce if a wife did no more than burn a meal.

5. The blessing Jesus spoke probably consisted of saying the names of God over the children.

6. This is a sincere man who obviously desires to enter God’s Kingdom. He perfectly represents the thinking of the time that will be so hard for Judaism to change, for he believes he’ll ultimately get to heaven by “doing” something. Jesus is not confirming his theology by listing commandments for him to obey, but is repeating what was believed by the Jews and others today: If one obeys God’s commandments, he goes to heaven. The man then confirms he knows something is missing from the mix, for he has been obedient from his youth. Jesus then calls on him to forsake all and follow Him—but as we see, the man’s wealth was a stumbling block for him. Had he followed Christ, he would have been led to the understanding that it is only by faith one is saved, and he possibly would have been the man who would have had Paul’s ministry. There is also a common false teaching that, “Jesus told him to keep the Ten Commandments to gain eternal life!” In fact, Jesus quoted from the whole of the Law, and *not* simply the Ten

Commandments! Five of these commandments are indeed found in the Ten, but the last, *and most important of them*, is not! Finally, nearly all false Christian cults (including many Messianic Jews) shipwreck on this verse, wrongly thinking that Jesus intends to teach, “Keep the commandments to go to heaven,” when He is really showing that *no one* will gain heaven by keeping commandments, because even the best man will always fall short of God’s actual standard of righteousness (Matt. 5:27-30). *This* man, in fact, was knee deep in idolatry, violating the first, and most important, commandment by having his wealth before God in his heart.

7. There is a common myth that there was a gate in Jerusalem called “the Needle,” and that camels could pass through it only by first having their packs removed and then entering without their burdens. No such gate existed in the time of Christ.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 20

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.
2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.
3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,
4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.
5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.
6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?
7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.
8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.
9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.
10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.
11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,
12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.
13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?
14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.
15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil¹, because I am good?
16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.
17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,
18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,
19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.
20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedees children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.
21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.²

MATTHEW CHAPTER 20

1 For the Messianic Kingdom is like a farmer who went out early one morning to hire grape-pickers for his vineyard.
2 He found some laborers, each of whom he promised to pay a silver penny for a day’s work; and he sent them out into the vineyard.
3 About nine in the morning, the farmer saw others standing idle in the marketplace,
4 And he told them, “You also go work in my vineyard, and I’ll pay you a fair wage.” So off they went.
5 At noon and three o’clock, he did the same thing.
6 About five PM, he found some others standing around idle, and so he asked, “Why have you been standing around all day, doing nothing?”
7 They answered, “Because no one has hired us today.” So the farmer told them, “You also head out into my vineyard, and I’ll pay you a fair wage.”
8 When the sun began to go down, the man said to his overseer, “Call in the pickers and pay them off, starting with those who have been here the least amount of time.”
9 When the ones hired at five PM came up, they were paid a silver penny.
10 But when the first group came up for payment, they expected more, yet got the same silver piece for their work.
11 Then, when they were paid the same silver piece, they complained to the farmer,
12 Saying, “Look here--these men came along in the last hour, and didn’t endure any of the heat like we did for you, yet you paid them the same wages as you did us?!”
13 But the farmer replied to one of them, “Friend, I didn’t cheat you. Didn’t you agree to work for a silver piece?”
14 “Take your money, and go. I choose to pay the last group the same price I paid you.
15 “Aren’t I allowed to do that with my own money? Why are you stingy with my money because you think me too generous?”
16 So the last will be first, and the first shall be last. For many are called, but few are chosen.
17 And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart on the road, and spoke to them:
18 Look--we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be handed over to the chief priests and the Torah teachers, and they shall condemn him to death.
19 They will hand him over to the Gentiles to mock him, whip him, and crucify him--but on the third day he will rise again!
20 Then the mother of Zebedee’s two sons, James and

22 But Jesus answered, and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.
 23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.
 24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.
 25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.
 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;
 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:
 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.
 29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.
 30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.
 31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.
 32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?
 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.
 34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

John, came up with them and knelt before Jesus, desiring a favor.
 21 He said to her: What is it that you wish? She answered: Grant that my two sons will be the most important officials of your kingdom, sitting at your right and left hands!
 22 But Jesus answered back: You two don't know what you're asking for! Are you able to drink the cup I must drink, and endure the baptism I must endure?
 The pair said: Yes, we can!
 23 So Jesus answered: Well, you will indeed partake of my cup and my baptism. But to rule at my right and left hands is not mine to give. Those positions will go to those for whom my Father has prepared them.
 24 When the ten others heard about this, they were furious at the two brothers.
 25 But Jesus called them over, and said: Gentile rulers are the ones who lord it over people, and they who are important exercise authority over those under them.
 26 But among you, that's not how it should be. Whoever wants to be important among you should do that by serving the others.
 27 And whoever wants to be the greatest among you should do that by being the greatest servant,
 28 Just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
 29 As they departed from Jericho, a great host of people followed along.
 30 Now there were two men sitting by the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out: Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!
 31 The crowds tried to hush them up, but they cried out all the louder: Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!
 32 But Jesus halted and called them up, asking: What do you want me to do for you?
 33 They answered: Lord, we want our sight restored!
 34 So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. When he did that, immediately they could see, and they followed him.

1. Remember that an "evil eye" in that culture referred to a greedy person.

2. The woman here is thought by some to be Jesus' aunt, who has come to Him to use her position to convince Him to give His cousins the two highest positions in His kingdom. The rest of the apostles are understandably angry.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 21

1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,
 2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.
 3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.
 4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,
 5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.¹
 6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,
 7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 21

1 Now when they neared Jerusalem and reached Bethphage, which is at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,
 2 Telling them: Go into that village there, and the first thing you'll see is an ass tied up with her foal. Untie them and bring them to me.
 3 If anyone asks what you're doing, say, "The Lord has need of them, and will send them right back."
 4 All this was done to fulfill a prophecy of Zechariah:
 5 **Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.**
 6 So the disciples went out and did as Jesus had ordered them.
 7 They brought the ass and her foal, spread their cloaks upon them, then sat Jesus upon the donkey.
 8 Many of the people strewed their garments before Jesus, while others cut and laid down tree branches.

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.²

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,

16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?³

17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.⁴ And presently the fig tree withered away.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

21 Jesus answered, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

23 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

24 And Jesus answered, and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in

9 And a huge multitude went before and followed behind, crying out: "Hosanna to the Son of David! *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!*"

10 When Jesus entered the gates of Jerusalem, the whole city was intrigued, and asked: Who is this man?

11 The multitude shouted back: This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee!

12 Jesus, meanwhile, went into the Temple of God and drove out those who transacted business there. He also overturned the tables of the money-changers and the chairs of those who sold sacrificial doves.

13 He said to them: It is written, **My house shall be called the house of prayer**; but you have made it a den of thieves!

14 The blind and crippled then came to him in the Temple, and Jesus healed them.

15 But when the chief priests and Torah teachers saw the great miracles, and the children [who served the High Priest] crying out in the Temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were enraged.

16 And they said to Jesus: Do you hear what these are saying?! But Jesus said in response: Yes--and have you never read [in the Septuagint]: **Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?**

17 Then he left them and departed the city for Bethany, where he spent the night.

18 The next morning, as he returned to the city, Jesus was hungry.

19 When he saw a good-looking fig tree near the road, he went over to it and found no fruit, but only leaves. So he cursed it, saying: Let no fruit ever grow on you again! And the tree immediately withered away.

20 When the disciples saw this, they were amazed, and said: How did the tree wither away so quickly?

21 Jesus answered, and said to them: I tell you truly, if you have faith, and do not give in to doubt, you can not only do what you have seen done to this fig tree, but you can also say to this mountain, "Get up, and be cast into the sea!" and it will be done.

22 And whatever you ask for in prayer, believing--you will receive!

23 When Jesus arrived at the Temple, the chief priests and the local religious authorities came up while he was teaching, and demanded to know: By what authority do you do these things, and who gave you this authority?!

24 Jesus replied: I'll ask you one thing, and if you can answer it, I will likewise answer by what authority *I* do these things:

25 John's baptism [and ministry]--was it from God, or was it his own invention? Having been asked this, the group reasoned how to answer, saying: If we say God gave it to him, he will ask, "Then why didn't you believe him?"

26 But if we say, "John made it up on his own," we'll have an angry mob upon us, for the people hold John to be a prophet.

27 So their answer was: We don't know. Thus, Jesus said back to them: Then I will not tell you by what authority *I* do these things!

28 But what do you think about *this*? A man had two sons, and he went to the first, and told him, "Son, go work in my vineyard today."

my vineyard.

29 He answered, and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered, and said, I go, sir: and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father?

They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.⁵

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

29 The son answered, "I will not." But after he thought about it, he changed his mind and did go.

30 The man said likewise to the second son who answered, "I will, Sir!" But he later changed his mind and did not go work.

31 Of the two, which did the will of his father? The group answered: The first. Jesus then said: I assure you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will go into the Kingdom of God before *you* will!

32 For John came, living and teaching the way of true righteousness, yet you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and prostitutes *did* believe him, and when you saw them repenting, you would not repent yourselves, and believe him.

33 Now listen to *this* parable: There was a certain farmer who planted a vineyard, made a fence around it, dug a winepress, set up a watchtower, and leased the vineyard out to sharecroppers while he left for a far-off country.

34 When the time to gather the proceeds arrived, he sent his representatives to the sharecroppers to collect his portion.

35 But the sharecroppers beat, murdered, and stoned his representatives.

36 He sent more representatives to them, and they did this again.

37 Finally, he sent his own son, saying to himself, "They will certainly honor my son!"

38 But when the sharecroppers saw the son, they said to themselves, "Here comes the heir to the estate--let's kill him, and then we'll take his inheritance for ourselves!"

39 So they grabbed hold of him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

40 When the owner of the vineyard comes himself, what will he do to the sharecroppers?

41 The leaders answered: He will utterly destroy those wicked men, and lease the vineyard to more trustworthy sharecroppers who will give the owner the fruits he has a right to expect when harvest time comes!

42 Jesus said in conclusion: Well, have you never read in the Scriptures: **The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?**

43 Therefore, I tell you that the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a people who *will* bring forth the fruits of it.

44 And whoever falls on this stone shall be broken [and used in building], but whomever the rock falls upon will be ground into dust.

45 When the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they realized Jesus was talking about *them*.

46 But when they debated taking him into custody, they feared the multitude because they believed him to be a prophet.

1. Jewish tradition held that if the people were righteous at the coming of the Messiah, he would ride into Jerusalem on a horse. If the people were unrighteous, he would enter on a donkey. You'll note in Rev. 20 that Jesus returns to the earth a second time on a horse, showing that the Jews will be righteous--meaning that they have been purified by turning to Christ during the tribulation.

2. As the Gospels will show, Jesus actually drives out the money-changers twice. It should also be kept in mind that there was nothing intrinsically wrong about their function. Indeed, it was necessary to purchase animals for sacrifice, and to redeem non-kosher foreign money--engraved with the images of Roman emperors, for example--for kosher coinage. The problem was that these concessions were controlled by the family of Annas, who charged exorbitant rates for their services, creating a profit that they used to bribe Roman officials for the position of High Priest. They were also showing disrespect by sitting down in a court other than the Court of Women, and this is why the Gospels make mention of the fact that Jesus overturns their seats.

3. Like 70% of the Old Testament quotes in the New Testament, this is from the Septuagint, which uses somewhat different wording than the Hebrew text. (In the Hebrew, it is “**strength**,” not “**praise**.”) The children were probably the attendants of the High Priest, a group who grew up in Temple isolation and assisted him because of their presumed purity and insulation from sin. Hearing them praise *Jesus* would have driven the Sadducees, from the High Priest on down, into a near-berserk rage.

4. The significance of Jesus cursing* the fig tree—which represents Israel and Judaism—cannot be minimized, for it is a direct refutation to the deceptive movement of Messianic Judaism! “**Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever**” makes it clear: The Law and religion of Judaism will never—repeat, *never*—be used of God to reach humanity again!

* He does not “Curse” the Law or Judaism because either are “bad,” but because the Law and its covenant was not “**faultless**” (Heb. 11:7), due to man’s frailty, and thus a new covenant must be instituted to accomplish what God seeks to do, and the Law can never be a part of it! Thus, no fruit from the Law and its covenant can ever be eaten from it again in God’s plan for men.

5. Better understood as being given to a “**people**,” not a “**nation**,” meaning the Gentiles, who will receive the Messiah, while the rulers of the Jews will reject Him.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 22

1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,
 2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,
 3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.
 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.
 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:
 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.
 7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.
 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.
 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.
 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good¹: and the wedding was furnished with guests.
 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:
 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?² And he was speechless.
 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.
 15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.
 16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.
 17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?
 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

MATTHEW CHAPTER 22

1 Jesus continued talking in parables, saying:
 2 The Kingdom of heaven is like a king who held a marriage for his son.
 3 He sent forth his servants to call the invited guests to the feast, but they would not come.
 4 So he sent more servants with the message to those invited: *I've prepared the banquet! The meat is cooked and ready. Come to the marriage banquet!*
 5 But they didn't take it seriously, and went about their normal activities, one to his farm and another to his business.
 6 The rest disrespected the king's servants, and killed them.
 7 When word reached the king, he was so furious that he sent his armies to kill those murderers and burn their city to the ground.
 8 He said to his servants: The wedding is ready, but those who were invited to it weren't worthy of the invitation!
 9 So go out onto the roads and invite anyone you see to the marriage feast.
 10 These servants did as they were told, and brought in as many people as they could find on the roads, bad people as well as good. And the wedding was full of guests.
 11 But when the king arrived to see the guests, he spotted a man who did not have on a new robe [which was handed out freely to anyone who came in through the gate].
 12 So the king said, "Friend, how did you get in here without the wedding garment [provided for you at the gate]?" But the man was speechless.
 13 Then the king said to the servants: "Bind up this party-crasher hand and foot, and cast him forth into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! [For he would have been welcome if he had come in through the same gate as everyone else, instead of sneaking in through some other way!]"
 14 You see, many are invited, but few are sought out and personally escorted in.
 15 Then the Pharisees held a meeting to discuss how to trap Jesus in his own words.
 16 So they sent their own representatives, together with some from the Herodian party [who supported returning the Herods to full authority over Judea], and they said: Teacher, we know you are sincere, and always teach the way of God truthfully, since man's approval means nothing to you.
 17 Give us your opinion on this issue: Is it within the Law of Moses that taxes should be paid to Caesar, or not?
 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said: Why do you try to trick me, you hypocrites?
 19 Show me the money of the Roman tax! So they brought

19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.
 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?
 21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.
 22 When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.
 23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,
 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.
 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:
 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.
 27 And last of all the woman died also.
 28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.
 29 Jesus answered, and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.
 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.
 31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,
 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.³
 33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.
 34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.
 35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,
 36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?
 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
 38 This is the first and great commandment.
 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
 41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
 42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.
 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,
 44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
 45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?⁴
 46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him

him a Roman coin.
 20 He took it, and said: Whose image and name is on this coin?
 21 They answered: Caesar's. So he said in response: Then give to Caesar what he has a right to expect, but give to God what *He* has a right to expect!
 22 When they heard these words, they marvelled and left him, going their own way.
 23 The same day, some Sadducees, who deny there is [an immortal soul or] a resurrection of the body, came up and asked:
 24 Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies childless, his brother must marry his wife, and provide him an heir so his bloodline doesn't die out.
 25 Now we know of seven brothers, and the first--after marrying the woman he was betrothed to--died childless. So his oldest brother married her, but had no children either.
 26 Then he died, and the next brother married her, and this pattern continued until all seven men died without the woman's ever having a child.
 27 Finally, the woman died.
 28 So at the resurrection of the dead, which of the seven will be her husband since they were all married to her?
 29 Jesus answered: You're wrong from the beginning since you don't even know or understand the Scriptures *or* the power of God!
 30 In the resurrection, people aren't married, nor are they given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven.
 31 But as touching whether there even is [an immortal spirit or] a resurrection of the dead, have you never read what God Himself spoke to you when He said:
 32 **I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** God could not be the Lord of three dead men in the grave with no consciousness! [Those men *had* to be conscious for God to be their Lord, wherever they may have been, and so they will rise in resurrection!]
 33 When the crowds heard this, they were amazed at Jesus' doctrine.
 34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they huddled together,
 35 And one of them, who was an expert in the whole of Mosaic Law, asked him a trick question:
 36 Master, what is the most important commandment in the Law?
 37 Jesus replied: **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.**
 38 This is the first and most important commandment!
 39 The second is just as critical: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**
 40 On these two commandments [hang all the written and oral Law]!
 41 While the Pharisees happened to be gathered together, Jesus asked them:
 42 What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he? They said: David's, of course!
 43 He said back: If that's true [in the way you think], why did David, under the inspiration of the Spirit, write in the psalms that the Messiah is his *Lord* [when a son is always in a lesser position than his father in our culture]?
 44 For he wrote, **The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.**

any more questions.

45 If David calls the Messiah his “Lord,” how can the Messiah be *his* son?
46 None of them could answer that, and from that day on, no one dared try to trick Jesus with questions.

1. The point being that both the righteous and unrighteous are invited into the Kingdom of God, and one need only accept the free invitation without “earning” it.
2. Jesus here continues the teaching, emphasizing that it is only the host who can make those who come to the feast acceptable. In the culture, a king or wealthy host of a wedding feast provided garments for all those invited, akin to the way gowns are provided for bridesmaids. The analogy is talking about being invited into the Kingdom of God, and the garment represents the righteousness we obtain through faith in Christ. The man who arrived in his own garment represents a person who relies on being accepted by God through his own efforts at obedience and good works. Some attempt to harmonize this passage with Rev. 19:8, which talks about those at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb being attired in white linen that presumably represents the good deeds of the saints. While good works in that context is a permissible interpretation of the word used for “**righteousness**” in that passage, there are problems with the overall idea equating both passages as the same exact feast. First, you then have a conflict with applying the garment mentioned in Revelation with that of the one mentioned in Matthew. In Revelation, according to works theology, the Bride has made herself ready by deeds of righteousness and obedience, and thus the Bride has woven her own garment. In the passage in Matthew, the allegory outlined is that of a king who provides the garment! The man who came in with no garment isn’t shown to have arrived naked, but merely failed to take the garment offered by the king, and arrived in his own clothing (i.e., his own works and righteousness). Rev. 3:18 itself shows the deception of such a theology when it reveals that one must obtain his garment of righteousness through Christ when it says, “**I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.**” Zephaniah 1:7-8 reiterates the fate of groups who attempt to enter the presence of God in the “strange apparel” of their own righteousness when it warns: “**Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall be in the day of the LORD’S sacrifice I will punish the princes, and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.**”
Beyond this, these are two different events. In the first, the king rejects those who were originally called to the feast and instead seeks out those who were never invited and previously did not know of it to enter. In Revelation, the Bride is well aware of who her husband is, was previously espoused to that husband, and in conscious anticipation of the marriage has done whatever she can to ready herself. But she already knew the groom before doing these things! Thus, to equate both passages as teaching that various works must be added to the “gift” of salvation in order to complete the process of having one’s sins forgiven is unwarranted, and is actually spiritual cyanide that will cause one to end up with the same fate as those who refused to come to the feast at all—the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth! The first passage is thus an allegory about salvation and being called into the Kingdom; the second is talking about the reward of those already *in* the Kingdom.
Finally, this parable, and the symbolism of Christ’s righteousness as the wedding garment guaranteeing one’s place at the banquet, could be the basis of Paul’s admonition in Romans 13:14 to “**put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.**”

3. Jesus’ statement in our language isn’t that impressive. But in the original language it would have been understood more along the lines of God’s saying: “**I am continuing to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.**” Thus, the Sadducees are taken aback by a statement from Scripture that seems to suggest that the dead, whom they mistakenly believe have no consciousness or continued existence, still *consciously* are acknowledging God. Jesus would undoubtedly repeat the same argument to denominations that believe that once one dies he stays dead unless God revives him at the Last Judgment. Such groups rely on a misunderstanding of verses like Ecclesiastes 9:5 that “**the dead know not anything**” to validate the false doctrine of “Soul Sleep.”
4. Jesus here points out that the (logical) understanding that the Messiah would be an anointed human man descended from David cannot be true in the way they believe, for in the Jewish culture a man never holds authority over his father, but always acknowledges his father’s authority over *him*. Yet David calls the Messiah his “**Lord**,” which is not consistent if the Messiah is a physical descendant of his, and nothing beyond that. Thus, Jesus starts to show that the basis upon which David can call his own descendant his “**Lord**” must be that the descendant is somehow God Himself, for the only men David, in the culture, could show such deference to would be his own father or related elders, a king with authority over him,* or God!

* Some who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, or that the Messiah is God in the flesh, might try to take the position that the Messiah is David’s Lord because he is a greater king, in the general sense of the word, than David was, with greater mortal authority than David had. The problem with this is that God in the Old Testament (Psalm 89:4, and elsewhere) promised David that his own throne would be everlasting—and since the promise was that *David’s* throne would be everlasting, David is given pre-eminence over the Messiah on one level since it is *David’s* throne, and not the Messiah’s, that God has initially decreed will be everlasting. Yet the Messiah, who sits on the throne of David, is still superior to David and is David’s “**Lord**.” Thus, the only way for the Messiah to simultaneously sit on David’s own throne as David’s own lord is for the Messiah to be God!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 23

1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
2 Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat:
3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.¹
4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their

MATTHEW CHAPTER 23

1 Jesus now spoke to both the crowd and his own disciples.
2 He said: The Torah teachers and the Pharisees have come to sit in Moses’ throne of authority.
3 So you must do all that they require you to do. But don’t do it with the same attitudes they have, for they talk a good talk, but they do not walk a good walk.
4 They lay hosts of their own tortuous commandments on the backs of the people to shoulder, and will not lift a finger to remove them.
5 But everything they do is done for them to look pious in

fingers.

5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.²

12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.³

16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!⁴

17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin⁵, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.⁶

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.⁷

26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,

the eyes of others. They wear big phylacteries on their heads, and fringes on their prayer shawls that reach down to their ankles.

6 They love to be invited to the best seats at banquets, and to have the choice seats in the synagogues.

7 They love men in the marketplace to greet them by calling them "Rabbi" or "Teacher."

8 But don't you take the title of *rabbi* to yourself [thinking to make followers of your own]. You have but one Lord and *rabbi*—me! And all of you are equally brothers in my sight.

9 And don't call any earthly man your "father" [in the sense that the Pharisees do teachers like Hillel and Shammai, or some do the High Priest]. Your one true Father is in heaven!

10 Nor should you consider yourselves to be masters, for the Christ is the only master.

11 But whoever would be the most important of you must be as the lowest slave.

12 And whoever will advance his own position and agenda within the community will be brought down, and the humble one shall instead be exalted.

13 But woe to you Torah teachers and Pharisees! You hypocrites do all you can to stop people from entering into the Kingdom of heaven that you, yourselves, reject!

14 Woe to you hypocritical Torah teachers and Pharisees! You throw penniless widows into the street, while you stand outside the door in the sight of others and pretend to pray like pious men! Thus, you will receive greater punishment in hell than most sinners!

15 Woe to you hypocrite Torah teachers and Pharisees for the fact that you'll travel over land and sea to make one convert to your brand of Judaism, then turn him into twice the child of hell that *you* are!

16 Woe to you blind guides who absolve a man invoking the Temple as witness when he swears an oath—unless the oath is one pertaining to a [*monetary gift* to the Temple]!

17 Blind fools—what is greater? The Temple itself, or the gold housed inside of it that the Temple makes holy?

18 If a person swears by the altar, he can change his mind. Oh, but if he swears by a *gift* upon the altar [that is promised to the Temple], then he is bound!

19 Blind fools—what is more important? The gift? Or the altar that makes the gift holy?

20 Whoever swears by the altar, swears by its holiness and all it represents!

21 Whoever swears by the Temple, swears by its holiness and Him who dwells in it!

22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and God who sits on that throne.

23 Woe to you hypocrite Torah teachers and Pharisees! [You Shammaiites tithe to the last kernel of grain], but

when it comes to what truly matters in the Law—justice, mercy, faithfulness—you act like you never heard of these! You should have done all with equal zeal!

24 But no—you are blind guides who make sure you strain out a tiny unclean gnat from the water you drink, while you gulp down an unclean camel without even noticing!

25 Woe to you hypocrite Torah teachers and Pharisees!

You ritually wash the cup and the plate to make whatever is served upon them holy, but there is nothing but graft and self-indulgence within you, yourselves!

26 Blind [Shammaiite] Pharisee—worry about cleaning what's inside the cup and plate of your own soul, and then the outside will take care of itself!

hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres⁸, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.
 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.
 29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,
 30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.
 31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.⁹
 32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.
 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?
 34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:
 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias¹⁰, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.
 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.
 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.¹¹
 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.¹²

27 Woe to you hypocritical Torah teachers and Pharisees! You are like painted tombs that look good on the outside, but inside are filled with dead bones that cause defilement and corruption to anyone they come into contact with!
 28 In the same way, you look righteous on the outside, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and unrepentant sin.
 29 Woe to you hypocritical Torah teachers and Pharisees! You build monuments to the prophets and the righteous dead,
 30 And say, "If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would never have joined in persecuting and slaying the prophets!"
 31 So you admit you're descended from the murderers of the prophets!
 32 Walk in their footsteps, and show the ultimate fruit of what your fathers were then!
 33 You snakes! You generation of vipers! What hope is there for you to escape damnation in hell?
 34 I'll send prophets, wise men, and teachers to you. Some you'll murder or crucify, and some you'll lash in the synagogues, drive out, and persecute from city to city.
 35 Upon your heads, therefore, will come the final responsibility for the blood of every righteous man ever slain, from Abel [in the first scroll of the Scriptures], to Zechariah ben Berechiah [in the last scroll of the Scriptures] who was slain between the Temple and the altar!
 36 I tell you truly that the punishment for all this will fall on the heads of this generation!
 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem--the city that kills the prophets and stones all who are sent to you--how often would I have gathered your children together like a hen gathers her chicks under her wing, but you refused!
 38 Look now--your Temple is left desolate to you!
 39 For I say that you will not see me [--your Messiah--] again until you say [of me,] "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

1. It is noteworthy that Jesus--at least to this point--accepts the authority of the Sanhedrin over Judaism. The authority will ultimately be lost upon the Sanhedrin's rejecting Christ, and will pass to the early disciples who eventually set up a Christian Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. (See Acts 1:15 which contrasts the number of believers as 120--duplicating the *Anshei Knesset ha Gedolah*, a Jewish quorum of the 2nd Temple period that issued rabbinic pronouncements and assembled parts of the Old Testament--with Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15:6 that Jesus appeared to 500 believers. Acts is speaking of the elders of the infant church, whereas Paul is including lay members as well.)

2. In the following verses, Jesus hasn't spoken against having titles in the church, but is warning against allowing oneself to seek followers for their own glory. The problem is shown by the Pharisees, many of whom identified themselves primarily as the followers of their teachers, Shammai and Hillel. Jesus is pointing out that a true man of God comes to serve those under him.

3. The precise meaning of this verse is unclear. It could be that Jesus is making a blanket indictment against the Pharisee movement as a whole. Falk suggests this was directed solely at the school of Shammai, and Jesus here is rebuking their attempts to convert Judaism to their particular way of thinking.

4. This is possibly alluding to the fact that a Jew, from the High Priest, or in the presence of three witnesses, could be absolved from any oaths made. However, if something was promised to the Temple, the agreement in most cases was binding.

5. This is yet another indication Jesus is specifically rebuking Pharisees from the school of Shammai, for dill was one of the things required for tithing by Shammai (Maaserot 1.1 cf. 4.6; Eduyyot 5.3; Demai 1.3).

6. A sad rebuke, showing the great flaw in Judaism--for to this day, the religion and its founders have written whole libraries on the intricacies of the Torah and the traditions surrounding it, yet have never been able to see that the whole purpose of the Torah and the Old Testament was to point to Jesus Christ.

7. This verse offers some further evidence that Jesus is restricting his rebuke to the Shammaiites, for the Talmud (Berekhos 51b) records that there was a difference of opinion between the two schools on the ritual before eating. Both schools of the Pharisees began their meals with a ceremonial cup of wine, but the school of Shammai believed that there should be a ritual hand washing before drinking the wine, lest the cup be defiled, whereas the school of Hillel disagreed and held the hand washing later in the meal, before breaking bread.

8. It was custom to whitewash tombs with chalk mixed in water in order to mark them so no one came into contact with them and became defiled (Num. 5:2 and 9:6-10).
9. It is commonly thought that Jesus is here referring to the death of the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, who was placed in a log and sawn in two by Manasseh. That is certainly possible, but taking the past few verses in the context of being a rebuke against the school of Shammai, a different meaning may emerge: In the early years of the 1st century when the school of Shammai was instituting its infamous "18 measures" meant to force the Jews to separate from the Gentiles, the school of Hillel vehemently opposed the idea. Things become so hot that the Zealots (who were apparently affiliated with the school of Shammai as early as 6 AD, and on through the fall of Jerusalem) murdered a number of Hillel's disciples over the dispute, whom the Talmud calls "prophets." Some of those Jesus was rebuking may literally have been the sons of Shammaites involved in the murders.
10. Further evidence that this could be a tirade against the school of Shammai is provided in this verse, which is commonly understood as Jesus referring to the prophet Zechariah who, although the son of Berechiah, is not known to have died in this manner, whereas another Zechariah, son of *Jehoiada*, is recorded in 2nd Chronicles 24 as indeed being killed at the Temple. Some make the claim that Zechariah ben Jehoiada was known in Jesus' time as Zechariah ben Berechiah according to the *Targums*. If so, Jesus would be referring to the first murder recorded in first book of the Bible; and the last, which in the Jewish canon of Scripture is in the book of Chronicles, which ends the canon. Josephus lists a Zechariah ben Berechiah as a righteous man murdered by Zealots on the Temple grounds, but his dating of the event does not seem to jibe with the statement.
11. A prophecy that the Temple would be destroyed, for "**the House**" was a slang term for the Temple.
12. Another prophecy that Jesus will not return until the Jews themselves cry out to Him. The prayer of, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" from Psalm 118 is made each Passover by Orthodox Jews. Jesus would be understood to mean that only when the Jews, as a people, finally acknowledge *Him* in that prayer will He return.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 24

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.¹

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?²

4 And Jesus answered, and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows³.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to

MATTHEW CHAPTER 24

1 Jesus left the Temple court, and the disciples directed his attention to some of the magnificent structures of the Temple complex.

2 But Jesus said in response: You see all these things? Truly I say to you, there won't be so little as two stones left cemented together of these buildings--they'll all be thrown down in rubble!

3 Later, as Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him without the crowds and asked: Tell us--when will the Temple be thrown down? And what will be the sign be of your ushering in the Kingdom, and the end of this age [before the Messianic Age begins]?

4 Jesus replied: Don't let anyone trick you!

5 Many false messiahs will come, claiming to *be* the Messiah, and hosts will be deceived by them.

6 And you will hear about wars and rumors of war coming. Don't worry, for these things must happen, but that will not signal the end yet.

7 For race will rise up against race, and nation against nation; and there will be famines, pestilence, and earthquakes in different places.

8 These are only the start of the *Birthpangs of the Messiah*.

9 Then you will be delivered over to torture and death because of your testimony for me. All nations will hate you because of who and what I am.

10 And many shall [lose their faith and] stumble, betraying each other and hating each other.

11 And many false teachers will arise, deceiving hosts of people.

12 And because of all the sin on the earth, people's love [and fear of God] will wane.

13 But he who endures to the end will be saved!

14 And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world for a witness to all peoples, and then shall the end come.

15 So when you see the *Abomination of Desolation* spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the Holy of Holies,

16 Let everyone in Judea run for the hills!

17 Don't even stop to take anything out of your house!

18 Let anyone working in the field not even return

take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day⁴:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened⁵, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.⁶

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.⁷

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.⁸

37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not, until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.⁹

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to

home to get anything!

19 Woe to pregnant and nursing women at that time!

20 And pray that your time to flee doesn't fall in the cold of winter or on the Sabbath [when you are commanded not to travel].

21 For at that time shall be a great tribulation, the like of which has never been seen, nor ever will be seen again.

22 And unless God intervenes to halt things, no one will survive. But for the sake of His elect people, God will intervene and cut things short.

23 In those days, if any man says, "The Messiah may be found in this place or that"--don't believe him!

24 For false Messiahs and false prophets will arise and do great signs and wonders that would fool even the true followers of God if that were possible.

25 Remember I've told you this before:

26 If they say the "real" Messiah is in the desert, don't go! If they say the "real" Messiah is hidden in some secret place--don't believe it!

27 For the Son of Man's coming shall be as fast as lightning flashing from east to west!

28 For, "Where the body is, the vultures gather."

29 Just after the tribulation period, *the sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the demonic powers of the heavens will be shaken* [and thrown down].

30 Then shall the sign of the Son of Man appear in the sky, and all the nations on earth will mourn as they see him coming with the hosts of heaven in all of his power and great glory!

31 And he shall send out his angels with the blast of a *shofar*, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a lesson from the fig tree: When the branches are green and full of leaves, you know that summer is at hand.

33 So when you see these signs appearing, know that what has been prophesied is close, and even at the doors!

34 I tell you truly, the generation that sees these things will not die out before what I prophesied comes to pass.

35 The universe and the earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away!

36 But as for the [*Rosh Hashanah*] that will see the culmination of these things, no one knows when it will be--not man, not angel, but my Father alone.

37 But as the days of Noah were, so will the days be when the Son of Man returns.

38 In the days before the flood they were going about life as usual: Eating, drinking, marrying, and so on, up to the point Noah entered the ark [and God shut the door].

39 They didn't realize what was happening until the flood swept them away. So will the Son of Man's coming be!

40 At that time, two shall be working in a field--one will be accepted and taken, and the other will be rejected and left.

41 Two women will be grinding flour at a mill--one will be accepted and taken, and the other will be rejected and left.

42 Watch then, for you don't know just when your

be broken up. 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.¹⁰ 45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.	Lord will return! 43 And keep in mind that if the owner of a mansion had known what time of night a thief was coming, he would have stayed awake, waiting--and his house wouldn't have been burgled! 44 So be likewise vigilant, for in such an hour that you're not expecting it, the Son of Man will come! 45 Who is a faithful and wise steward the master can leave in charge to feed those in the household while he is away? 46 The steward who does that will be blessed when his master comes and sees him being faithful in doing these things. 47 Truly I say to you, that master will elevate him to overseer over all he has. 48 But if an evil steward says to himself, "My master isn't going to return for a long time," 49 And beats his underlings, and then goes out to party with the drunkards, 50 The master will return on a day when the steward isn't looking for him, and at an hour the steward doesn't expect, 51 And cut him into pieces and throw him out into the same place of punishment as the hypocrites--a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
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1. Herod's Temple was one of the great wonders of the ancient world, and was unsurpassed in its beauty, being built of white and green marble. (According to Lawrence Stager in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 2000, originally the Temple grounds were even filled with fruit trees in the courts to duplicate the Garden of Eden.) Skeptics often claim Jesus made a false prophecy since the Wailing Wall is still standing. However, the Temple was technically the small building housing the Holy Places, whereas the massive complex were additional buildings constructed according to the whims of Herod the Great. Also, the Wailing Wall was only a retaining wall and was not a part of the true Temple. Finally, it should be noted that technically cement was not used in the Temple's construction, but the paraphrase uses the word for ease of understanding.
 2. In the minds of the apostles, they have asked one question because they see all these things coming in one event. In actuality, they have asked three separate questions, and Jesus responds to each question.
 3. This word is translated as "sorrows," but "birthpangs" is the correct meaning. In Jewish eschatology, there was a seven-year period of travail called the *Chevlei shel Moshiach*, or the "Birthpangs of the Messiah," a seven-year period of tribulation corresponding to Daniel's 70th week, that would culminate in the Messiah's arrival to rule. The seven-year birthpangs were thought to be the first seven years of the Messianic Age. This corresponds to the Christian *Great Tribulation*.
 4. This verse is a major problem for Christians who think Gentile Christianity has replaced Israel, for what Christian would be hindered from escaping danger on the Sabbath? Very clearly, Jesus is addressing ultra-Orthodox Jews whose commitment to Torah is such that they refuse to travel on the Sabbath even to save their own lives. Although Judaism as a whole accepts that one may profane the Sabbath to save his life, there are examples in history of Orthodox Jews refusing to compromise--and dying for their commitment. It may thus be that Jesus here is referring only to the events around the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and His words are not specifically referring to the great tribulation, for Jews of 70 AD would have been more reluctant to travel on a Sabbath than Jews of today.
 5. Probably meaning that God will have to intervene to shorten the tribulation or the whole earth will be destroyed.
 6. This is one of the most difficult to understand verses in the New Testament. Many scholars believe Jesus is quoting a proverb, but its meaning is unknown. Stern suggests the vultures ("eagles" is a mistranslation) are demons who gather around the Antichrist to deceive the world and carry out his bidding.
 7. In the Greek, Jesus' words are most reasonably understood as speaking of the generation present at the earth at that time. This is not as problematic as some make it, for 40 years later Jerusalem fell, and the Temple was destroyed. It is perfectly reasonable to presume that the prophecy has a double reference--one for the time of the apostles, and the greater at the end of the world.
 8. First of all, Jesus seems to be making a direct reference that His eventual coming will be on the Jewish Festival of *Rosh Hashannah*, the equivalent of New Year's Day, which takes place in September. "**The day and the hour**" is a term associated with that Festival, and Jesus' language would be akin to if I were to tell an American: "No one knows just when you'll be carving the turkey when I return." This would immediately reveal to you I am talking about the Thanksgiving season, and Jesus likewise is making a direct reference to fulfilling the prophetic implications of *Rosh Hashannah*, which prefigure the coronation of the Messiah.
- During *Rosh Hashannah* (the Feast of Trumpets), the *shofar* is blown in a series of blasts, (one of which is known as *the last trump*) to announce the arrival of God to make a preliminary judgment of the people of the earth before the final judgment of *Yom Kippur*; and the books of the Righteous, the Sinners, and the Unrighteous are opened. Each person's name is then written in one of the three. (Some Jewish legends also hold that the resurrection of the dead will occur on *Rosh Hashannah*.)
- Rosh Hashannah* is celebrated as a two-day Festival to guarantee that the forthcoming *Yom Kippur* does not fall on the 1st or 6th days of the week (based on a lunar calendar). Thus, even if a person knew precisely which *Rosh Hashannah* Jesus would return on, he still couldn't know which of the two days that would take place on, nor could he know the hour. Because we know that Jesus' life perfectly fulfilled the symbolism of the Festivals on the correct days (for instance, dying on Passover, resurrecting on First Fruits, sending the Holy Spirit on Pentecost), the symbolism of *Rosh Hashannah* is a key indicator in supporting a pre-tribulation Rapture

theory and revealing that the return of Christ for His church will be on a *Rosh Hashannah* of some year.

9. This verse, and a parallel verse in Luke 17:34-35, is debated amongst theologians. Those who hold a post-tribulation Rapture theory claim the event takes place at the end of the world, and the one “**taken**” is the sinner whisked off to judgment, while the one “**left**” is the righteous. There is a problem in this view, for the words here seem to mean the opposite of what the post-tribbler believes. Let us look at the verse: “**the one shall be taken....**” The word here for “**taken**” is *paralambano*. *Paralambano* is a compound word comprised of *para* (“beside,” or “alongside”) and *lambano* (“take”). It is therefore a stronger word than to merely grab something, and is used in the sense of taking a person to oneself in a manner one would a friend or relative, although the word can be used in the sense of compelling a person to go someplace as in the case where the devil “**taketh**” (*paralambano*) Jesus to the top of a high mountain. However, *paralambano* is the same word translated as “**receive**” in John 14: 3, where Jesus says He is going to prepare a place for the disciples, and that He will come back to “**receive**” (*paralambano*) them to Himself. The problem does not end there, for the next line poses another major problem to the post-trib. Rapture doctrine: “**...and the other left.**” The word here for “**left**” is *aphiemi*. Overwhelmingly, *aphiemi* conveys the opposite feeling of *paralambano*. *Paralambano* in such a context is a word used to convey acceptance, while *aphiemi* conveys rejection in the sense of: divorce, rejection, lack of concern, abandonment, and so on. Both words placed together make it difficult to understand the verse as saying anything other than that Christ accepts the one “**taken**” but rejects the one “**left.**” No matter what one’s view on when the Rapture takes place, the one “**taken**” most reasonably seems to be the Christian, for only by ignoring the practical Greek applications of these words being placed together, and creating the theology from an ambiguous English translation of the text, can the opposite point be made without having some issues to deal with.

10. This can be inferred as yet another problem for those promoting the post-trib. Rapture theory, for if the coming of Christ is at a time of universal catastrophe and calamity, at the end of a hellish tribulation--there would be no surprise. If the choice were between Christ’s return and the destruction of the earth, of Christianity, or of the Jewish people on a worldwide scale--it would be obvious to any remaining believers that Christ must come immediately. In fact, verses 40 and 41, which we have dealt with, seem to show the return of Christ for the church will be at a relatively benign time when people seem to be leading normal, carefree lives--working in the fields, grinding in homes, sleeping in bed, etc., rather than panicking, hiding, fleeing, and so on, as go with the post-tribbler’s beliefs that the church will be persecuted to the point of death before Christ comes for it. Jesus, in earlier verses, has shown that there *will* be great catastrophes occurring at the end, but the fact that He also shows a rather normal world when some are “**taken**” and “**left**” fits fine with the notion of a pre-tribulation gathering of the saints with the return of Christ to the earth at the end, when all agree the world will indeed be in great turmoil.

None of the three views on when the Rapture takes place are conclusively “provable” from Scripture, but in coming to a decision on which view to accept, one should at least be as honest in interpreting the Scriptures as possible. Now if one only goes from the Scriptures, in my opinion a slightly stronger (but still inconclusive) case can be made for a post-trib. position. However, if one goes beyond trying to decipher the Scriptures, which do not answer the question conclusively, and then look to the symbolism within Judaism’s Festivals and culture for additional clarification, the balance, in my opinion, shifts greatly to a pre-trib. Rapture position, for the Jewish wedding ceremony and honeymoon show the symbolism of that view.

For a start, once the engagement commences, the prospective bridegroom leaves the bride with these words: “I go to prepare a place for you, and I will return for you” (the same words Jesus will use during the Last Supper with His disciples). The bridegroom then prepares the place where the two will eventually live. The bride, meanwhile, is to expectantly await the coming of the bridegroom since he can return at any time. When the bridegroom does return, he comes with a shout of, “Behold, the bridegroom comes,” and a trumpet is sounded. He then takes the bride in a procession and the two undergo the marriage ceremony. The couple then go to the bridal chamber where they spend the next seven days (note the symbolism) together. After this, they return to the original house of the bride for the marriage supper and take up their normal life together.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 25

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.
2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.
3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:
4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.
6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.
7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.
8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.
9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.
10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.
11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.
12 But he answered, and said, Verily I say unto you, I

MATTHEW CHAPTER 25

1 When that happens, the Messianic Kingdom will be likened to ten virgins who took oil lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.
2 Five of these were wise, and five were foolish.
3 The foolish brought lamps, but no spare oil.
4 The wise brought spare oil flasks with their lamps.
5 The bridegroom took his time and didn’t immediately appear, so they fell asleep waiting [and their lamps went out].
6 Then, at midnight, someone cried out: “The bridegroom is coming--go out and meet him!”
7 Then the virgins arose and began to ready their lamps.
8 The foolish said to the wise, “Loan us some oil--our lamps went out!”
9 But the wise replied, “We can’t, lest we run out of oil ourselves. Go and buy some oil for yourselves from a vendor!”
10 So the foolish went to buy some, but the bridegroom came in the meantime and the wedding party went into the house, and the door was shut behind them.
11 Finally, the foolish virgins returned. They tried to enter, calling out, “Lord! Lord! Open up the door for

know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 And unto one he gave five talents¹, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came, and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

26 His lord answered, and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.²

30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant³ into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was

us!"

12 But he answered from behind the door, "I tell you in truth, I don't know you!"

13 So keep watch, for *you* do not know 'The Day and the Hour' that the Son of Man will return.

14 For the Messianic Kingdom is like a man who was going on a long trip to a faraway country, who called his servants and assigned some money to them for investment.

15 He gave five ounces of gold to one, two ounces to another, and one ounce to a last, according to how wise he thought they were. Then he left on his journey.

16 The man with five ounces of gold did some buying and trading, and he doubled the money.

17 The one with two ounces of gold did likewise.

18 But the one with only an ounce of gold simply went out and buried his lord's money in the ground.

19 After a long time, the lord of the servants returned and called them to account for what they had done.

20 The one with five ounces of gold brought back ten, saying, "Lord, look! I've turned the five ounces of gold you gave me into ten!"

21 His lord said, "Well done, you good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a few things--now I will make you ruler over many things. [Come rejoice with me, and take on new, more important duties!]"

22 The one with two ounces of gold came up, and said, "Lord, look! I have turned your two ounces of gold into four ounces!"

23 His lord said, "Well done, you good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a few things--now I will make you ruler over many things. [Come rejoice with me, and take on new, more important duties as well!]"

24 But the servant with only one ounce of gold came up, and said, "Lord, I know you are a stern man who lets others take the risks for him and keeps whatever profits they make.

25 "I was afraid of what you'd do if I lost your money so I hid your gold in a hole. Look--here it is back!"

26 His lord was furious, and answered, "You wicked, lazy servant--so you know I let others take the risks, and then take the profits they make?!"

27 "Then you should have at least loaned the money out so I could get some interest on what I gave you. [Instead, you did nothing with it, and took no risks at all, showing you to be utterly useless!]"

28 "Take that ounce of gold from him and give it to the servant with ten ounces of gold!"

29 "For everyone who has [understanding] shall be rewarded with much more. But he who has not [understanding] will lose what little he may have had!"

30 "So cast that useless servant into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth!"

31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the holy angels, then he will sit upon his glorious throne.

32 And before him will be gathered all peoples of the earth, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd does with sheep and goats [which are never allowed to be in the same flock].

33 He will set the sheep on his right hand but the goats on his left.

thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:
 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.
 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?
 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?
 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.
 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:
 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:
 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.
 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?
 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.
 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, blessed of my Father, and inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,
 35 "For I was hungry, and you fed me; thirsty, and you gave me water; homeless, and you took me in;
 36 "Naked, and you clothed me; sick, and you came and aided me; in prison, and you visited me!"
 37 Then the righteous will answer: "Lord, when did we ever see you hungry, and fed you? Or thirsty, and gave you water?
 38 "Or homeless, and took you in? Or naked, and gave you clothing?
 39 "Or when did we see you sick or in prison, and come visit you?"
 40 And the King will answer: "I tell you that when you did such things to even the least of these who are my brothers, you did it to me, personally!"
 41 Then the King will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you accursed ones! Go forth into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!
 42 "For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me; thirsty, and you gave me no water;
 43 "A homeless stranger, and you didn't take me in; naked, and you gave me no clothes; in prison, and you didn't visit me."
 44 These shall also answer, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a homeless stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and didn't aid you?"
 45 And he will answer them, "I say to you that any time you did not help the least of these, you rejected helping me as well!"
 46 So these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.

1. A "talent" was actually an enormous amount of gold--up to 75 pounds--and one point being made is that Christ has given us an unlimited amount of resources (through faith and the Spirit) to accomplish His work on earth. The man who did nothing can be said to have ignored the opportunity to use the nearly unlimited resources that were available to him. Note, however, that to make things a bit more comprehensible to the reader, the author has reduced this staggering amount of gold from pounds to ounces of gold in the Gospel paraphrases. Even a humble ounce of gold would have been a near fortune to a normal person of the time, and still makes the point adequately.
2. Jesus' words here often puzzle readers, but Matthew 13:11-12 reveals He is talking about having understanding.
3. As a point of interest, Eusebius noted that his Aramaic copy of Matthew actually had this parable written differently. In that, the man who *hid* the gold was the one who was praised, and the *others* cursed!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 26

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,
 2 Ye know that after two days is the Feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.
 3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,
 4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.
 5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.
 6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper¹,
 7 There came unto him a woman² having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.
 8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?
 9 For this ointment might have been sold for much,

MATTHEW CHAPTER 26

1 Now when Jesus finally completed all these comments, he told the disciples:
 2 As you know, in a couple of days will be the Passover. The Son of Man will then be betrayed to be crucified.
 3 At this time, the chief Sadducee priests, along with some hostile Torah teachers and assorted religious and city leaders, met at the palace of the High Priest who was named Caiaphas.
 4 They debated how to trick Jesus into being captured so they could kill him in a safe manner [that would avoid a public riot].
 5 They said: It must not be on the Feast day, lest the people rise up and make trouble.
 6 Jesus, meanwhile, retired to Bethany, and happened to be eating dinner in the house of Simon the leper [father of Judas].
 7 While he was there, a woman came into the house with an alabaster container filled with costly ointment. She poured it upon his head as he reclined at the table.
 8 But when the disciples saw this, they were disgusted,

and given to the poor.

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.³

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

17 Now the first day of the Feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man⁴, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

23 And he answered, and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered, and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

30 And when they had sung an hymn⁵, they went out into the mount of Olives.

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.⁶

33 Peter answered, and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That

and said: Why this waste?!

9 This ointment could have been sold for a lot of money that could have been given to the poor!

10 When Jesus knew what they were saying, he answered them: Why are you troubling this woman? She has performed a good work upon me.

11 You will always have the poor with you, but I won't always be here.

12 She has anointed my body like this in preparation for my burial.

13 And I want you to know that wherever in the world the Gospel is preached, what she did will be remembered and preached about too.

14 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief Sadducee priests.

15 He said to them: What price would you pay for me to deliver Jesus into your hands? They agreed to pay him thirty silver coins.

16 From that time, Judas waited for an opportunity to betray him.

17 Now on the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus, and asked: Where do you want us to prepare a Passover *seder* for you?

18 Jesus answered: Go into Jerusalem to a certain man you will meet, and tell him, "My time is at hand. I, and my disciples, will observe the Passover at your house."

19 The disciples did as Jesus commanded, and they prepared the *seder*.

20 Now when the evening came, Jesus reclined with the twelve.

21 As they ate, Jesus said: Truly I tell you, that one of you will betray me.

22 They were all very sorrowful, and each began to ask him: Lord--is it I?

23 Jesus replied: He who dips his hand in the dish with me is the same who will betray me.

24 The son of Man will go to what awaits him as the Scripture foretells--but woe to the man responsible for it! It would be better for him to have never been born!

25 Then Judas, who was the one to betray him, said [quietly]: Rabbi, is it I? Jesus answered [quietly as well]: You have said it.

26 As they continued the meal, Jesus took unleavened bread, said a blessing, and broke it, handing out pieces to his disciples. He said: Take and eat, for this is my body.

27 Then he took the cup, said a blessing, and gave it to the disciples, saying: Drink this, all of you.

28 This is the New covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for many so that their sins will be forgiven.

29 I tell you that I will not drink fruit of the grapevine again until I drink it new with you in the Kingdom of my Father.

30 And after they had sung one of the Hymns of Ascent, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

31 Jesus said to them: All of you will stumble tonight because of me, for it is written: **I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.**

32 But after I rise again, I will wait for you in Galilee.

33 Peter spoke up, saying: Even if all these other men stumble because of you--I never will!

34 Jesus said back to him: Truly I tell you, Peter, that before the "rooster" crows, you will deny me three times.

this night, before the cock⁷ crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me⁸: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him.

51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the

35 Peter assured him: Even if I have to die at your side, I will not deny you! The other disciples also said things like this.

36 Then Jesus and the rest arrived at an [olive press] called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to the disciples: Sit here, while I go pray over there.

37 Jesus took Peter, along with Zebedee's two sons, James and John, a few yards away. Then he began to be very sorrowful and troubled in spirit.

38 He said to them: The sorrow is almost more pressure than I can bear, and keep my life. Wait here, and keep watch with me.

39 Jesus went a little farther and fell on his face, praying: O my Father--if it is possible, let me not have to drink this cup that awaits me. But not my will be done, but Yours!

40 He came back to the disciples and found them asleep, so he awakened Peter, and said: What--you couldn't watch with me for one hour?!

41 Watch and pray, lest you fall to temptation. Your spirit may be willing, but your flesh is weak!

42 Jesus went back, and for the second time prayed: O my Father, if this cup cannot pass from me unless I must drink from it, Your will be done!

43 Again, Jesus went back to find the disciples asleep, for they had become very tired.

44 So he left them alone and went back, praying likewise for the third time.

45 Then he returned to the disciples, saying: Go ahead, and sleep. The hour is come, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Get up--let us go on to what awaits. See--the one who is betraying me has arrived!

47 While he was yet speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived at the head of a great crowd armed with swords and clubs that had been sent by the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 The traitor had told them beforehand to watch for his signal: The one I go up and kiss is Jesus--take him into custody.

49 So he came right up to Jesus, and said: Hail, master! And he kissed him.

50 Jesus said: Why are you here, "friend"?! Then they came up, laid hold on Jesus, and took him away.

51 Now Peter, at seeing all this, drew out a sword and swung it, cutting off an ear of a servant of the High Priest.

52 Jesus told him: Sheath your sword, for those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

53 Don't you think I could ask to my Father and He would instantly send twelve legions of angels to help me?

54 But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must be this way.

55 Jesus then said to the crowd: Why do you come with swords and clubs to take me into custody like I'm some kind of bandit? I sat in the Temple daily, and taught in your presence--and you did not take me then, did you?

56 But all this was done so that what the prophets foretold in the Scriptures would be fulfilled. It was then that the disciples abandoned him and ran for their lives.

57 Meanwhile, the ones who had hold of Jesus led him away to the palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the Torah teachers and assorted religious leaders had

prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.
 57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.
 58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.
 59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council⁹, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;
 60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,
 61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.
 62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?
 63 But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered, and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.
 64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said¹⁰: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.
 65 Then the high priest rent his clothes,¹¹ saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.
 66 What think ye? They answered, and said, He is guilty of death.
 67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,
 68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?
 69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.
 70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.
 71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.
 72 And again he denied with an oath¹², I do not know the man.
 73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee.
 74 Then began he to curse and to swear¹³, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.
 75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

assembled.
 58 Peter, meanwhile, followed from a safe distance and finally made his way into Caiaphas' palace where he mingled with some of the servants in the courtyard, hoping to see what would happen.
 59 Now the chief Sadducee priests, other religious leaders, and all the members of the [city] Sanhedrin, looked for pairs of liars who would falsely swear that Jesus had done something worthy of death.
 60 But they found none who could get their stories straight, until one last pair of false witnesses came up,
 61 Who declared: This man said, "I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and rebuild it in three days."
 62 Caiaphas, hearing this, arose and spoke: You have no answer to this? The comments these men say you made--what did you mean?
 63 But Jesus remained silent. The High Priest, irritated, finally said to him: I demand, by the Living God, that you tell us whether you claim to be the Messiah and [King of Israel]!
 64 Jesus now answered: You have said it! Nevertheless, I say to you all, that the day will come when you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of "The Power," and coming in the clouds of heaven!
 65 Then the High Priest tore his robes [disqualifying himself from making the Passover sacrifice for the people], saying: He has blasphemed God! Who needs more witnesses? You all heard his blasphemy!
 66 What is your verdict? They answered: He is guilty, and must die!
 67 Then they spit in his face and struck him; and others slapped him in the face with their palms,
 68 Saying: Prophecy to us, Messiah! What is the name of the man who struck you?
 69 While this was going on, Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came up who said: You were with Jesus of Galilee too!
 70 But he denied it to the crowd, saying: I don't know what you're talking about!
 71 He left, and eventually found his way near the gate to the street where another female servant caught sight of him, and told the others: This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth!
 72 Then Peter swore: I don't know the man!
 73 A while later, others standing around came up, saying: You *must* be one of them--you have a Galilean accent!
 74 Peter then invoked curses on himself if he knew Jesus, and swore an oath, saying: I don't know that man! And as he did, the "rooster" cried out.
 75 Then Peter remembered the words of Jesus: "Before the 'rooster' crows, you will deny me three times." And he left, weeping bitterly.

1. Probably the father of Judas (John 13:2). The point must also be addressed that a heresy has arisen amongst certain Messianic groups that this verse "proves" the Greek Scriptures are unreliable, and that only by redacting the Greek into Hebrew--which sometimes gives a vastly different meaning to the text on major issues--can we know the truth of the New Testament. As the claim goes, because a leper is forbidden by the Torah to live in a city, the Greek word for a leper can supposedly be traced back to a Hebrew word that means a jar-maker. Therefore, the Greek is wrong when it says Simon was a leper, for he *must* have been a jar-maker! Well, whether it is from lack of knowledge of the Torah, or else intent to deceive by omitting historical fact, lepers were banned only from *walled* cities. Bethany is an *unwalled* city, and so a leper would certainly be permitted to dwell there if he had the resources. It might also be speculated that Simon was a *former* leper whom Christ or one of the disciples had healed at some point. Since he was (probably) the father of Judas, Judas himself may have healed him during Christ's days of ministry.

2. The woman is Mary, sister of Lazarus.

3. Just what the basis is of Judas' betrayal cannot be known. About all we can surmise is that he did *not* do it for the money as 30 shekels would hardly cover the cost of a nice set of clothes in that time. Even if we redefine the coinage as some other denomination, the amount is still insignificant, especially in light of the fact that Judas had been the group's treasurer, and had been lifting money for himself for quite some time (John 12:6). Either Judas felt humiliated and betrayed Christ for that reason, or perhaps he did it to force Jesus into a position of having to use His power to destroy His enemies and set up the Kingdom.
4. Possibly the father of Mark.
5. The *Psalms of Ascent* sung during the Festivals (Psalms 120-134).
6. It is interesting to note that the apostles will disobey this order of Christ to meet Him in Galilee after hearing He has risen, and instead will remain hiding in Jerusalem.
7. This is not talking about a rooster! Roosters were banned in Jerusalem because they were among the animals whose dung smelled without being stepped on. (There was also a superstition involved with the way they scratch the ground.) The "**cock**" spoken of here was a temple officer known as a *gever*, akin to a town crier, who would call for the various priests to take their stations as dawn neared. A slang term for him was a *cock* or *rooster*. Because of the proximity of Caiaphas' house to the Temple, he would have been able to be heard in the courtyard where Peter was.
8. Jesus is not praying to avoid crucifixion, but is asking if there is a way to keep from '**becoming sin**' upon the cross.
9. Just who made up this assembly is unclear. It may have been a meeting of the Sanhedrin called by Caiaphas, or it may have been a sub-council of Sadducees and elders that had some level of control over Jerusalem's affairs or those of the Temple. Gamaliel, president of the Sanhedrin, seems to be missing from this assembly, for certainly the book of Acts would not praise him as it does if he is among those condemning Christ. Also, if this is a meeting of the true Sanhedrin, there are several problems, not the least of which is that Mark says "**all**" the council (Mark 15:64) condemned Jesus. If this is true, it contradicts Luke (Luke 24:50-51) who says that Nicodemus "**did not**" agree with the council. It may thus be that this "**council**" is not the actual Sanhedrin but some sort of sub-body. (In fact, there is some evidence that there was a Sadducee council of 23 elders called the *Council of the Chief Priest*.) In any event, if Mark is correct that "**all**" the members of this council voted to condemn Jesus, it cannot possibly be the Great Sanhedrin that made this vote, for the Sanhedrin is not permitted to pass a death sentence on a unanimous vote! The Sanhedrin was also required to pass a death sentence in a special place in the Temple called the *Chamber of Hewn Stone*, which it had been boycotting in protest over the Romans keeping charge over the High Priest's vestments. Thus, I suggest this was not an official meeting of the Sanhedrin proper, but a hastily assembled meeting of elders, including some people from the Sanhedrin, illegally passing judgment on Jesus and handing Him over to the Romans. Josephus, in *Antiquities* 20. 9.1 199-203, relates that the High Priest Ananus formed a similar council to try James.
10. In the Greek, this is a strong statement more along the lines of, "You said it!" It is also an Eastern way of saying, "You're right!"
11. By this act, a point can be made that Caiaphas has disqualified himself as High Priest, for he is forbidden by the Torah (Lev. 10:6) to rend his garments. (Judaism, however, limits this only to rending garments in mourning for a relative, and would thus excuse Caiaphas.) Rabbinic tradition, however, required: *When witnesses speak out the blasphemy which they heard, then all hearing the blasphemy, are bound to rend their clothes.*
12. This is not saying that he was cussing, but rather saying something along the lines of, "I swear I don't know him!"
13. At this point, he may/may not be cussing, but is certainly invoking curses on himself if he knows Jesus--and swearing an oath that he doesn't know him for good measure!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 27

1 When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:
 2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.¹
 3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself², and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,
 4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.
 5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple³, and departed, and went and hanged himself.
 6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.⁴
 7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.
 8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.
 9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;
 10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.⁵

MATTHEW CHAPTER 27

1 At dawn, the chief Sadducee priests and the religious leaders of the people debated how to put Jesus to death.
 2 After they had tied his hands together, they led him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Prefect [who had come from Caesarea to Jerusalem because of the Passover Festival].
 3 Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that Jesus was condemned by the religious authorities, regretted what he had done, and brought back the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders.
 4 He said: I have sinned in betraying an innocent man to you. They answered: That's *your* problem, not ours!
 5 Then Judas threw down the silver in the Holy Place of the Temple, and left to go hang himself.
 6 The chief Sadducee priests took back the silver, but said: This is blood money, and the Torah does not allow it to go into the treasury to be used for holy purposes.
 7 So they debated, and wound up using it for a public work: They purchased a field from a potter and used it as a place to bury foreigners in.
 8 That's why the field is called the *Field of Blood*, even to this day.
 9 This fulfilled a prophecy in the books categorized under the Jeremiah scroll: **And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;**
 10 **And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.**

11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.
 12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.
 13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?
 14 And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.
 15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.⁶
 16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.
 17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?
 18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.
 19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.
 20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.
 21 The governor answered, and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.
 22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.
 23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.
 24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.
 25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.
 26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.
 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.
 28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.
 29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!
 30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.
 31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.
 32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.
 33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,
 34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.⁷
 35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments,

11 When Jesus stood before the Prefect, Pilate asked him: Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus replied: You said it!
 12 But when the religious leaders who brought him made accusations, Jesus did not make a reply.
 13 Then Pilate said: Do you hear all the crimes they accuse you of?
 14 But Jesus said nothing to him, which caused the Prefect to be amazed.
 15 Now at the Passover [and other] Festivals, the Prefect had a habit of releasing to the people a prisoner chosen by them [as a measure of good will].
 16 There happened to be a notorious criminal named bar Abbas [--meaning *Son of the Father*--] in jail.
 17 Thus, with a crowd handy, Pilate asked: Whom do you wish released to you--bar Abbas? Or Jesus, who is called 'the Anointed One'?
 18 Pilate, you see, knew the priests had brought Jesus to him out of petty jealousy.
 19 Beyond that, when he had taken the Judgment Seat, he had received an urgent letter from his wife that read: *Don't have anything to do with that innocent man! I've been troubled all day over a horrible dream about him!*
 20 But the Sadducees and other religious leaders, meanwhile, had persuaded the crowd to ask for bar Abbas, and to demand Jesus be slain.
 21 So when the Prefect asked which of the two they wanted released, they shouted out: bar Abbas!
 22 Pilate then said: So what shall I do with Jesus, who is called 'the Anointed One'? The crowd shouted back: Let him be crucified!
 23 And the Prefect said: Why? For what evil does he deserve this? But they cried out all the louder: Let him be crucified!
 24 When Pilate saw the crowd was getting riotous and would not be persuaded by him, he called for a bowl of water and washed his hands before them, saying: I am innocent of this guiltless person's blood! *You* see to it!
 25 Then all the crowd answered: Fine--his blood be on us and our children then!
 26 So Pilate released bar Abbas to the crowd; then he had Jesus flogged, and ordered him to be crucified.
 27 The legionnaires then took Jesus into their barracks and gathered round with their fellows.
 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him.
 29 When they had woven a crown from a thorny vine, they placed it on his head and stuck a reed stick in his right hand. Then they mockingly got on their knees before him, shouting: Hail, King of the Jews!
 30 And they spat on him, and hit him over the head with the stick.
 31 After they tired of this mockery, they took the robe off him and put back on his own clothing, then led him away to be crucified.
 32 As they were going out of the city, they found a man--Simon of Cyrene--whom they ordered to help Jesus carry his cross.
 33 And when they had come to a place outside the city called Golgotha, which means, *Place of the Skull*,
 34 They offered him some vinegar mixed with gall to drink--but when Jesus tasted it, he would not drink it down.

casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.
 36 And sitting down they watched him there;
 37 And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.⁸
 38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.
 39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,
 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.
 41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,
 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.
 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.⁹
 44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.¹⁰
 45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.¹¹
 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani. That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
 47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.
 48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.
 49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.
 50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.
 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom¹² and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;
 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,¹³
 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.
 54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.
 55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:
 56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.
 57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:
 58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.
 59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,
 60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

35 And they crucified him, then cast dice for his clothing, so that which was spoken by the prophet could be fulfilled: **They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.**
 36 Then they sat down to watch the spectacle.
 37 A sign nailed over Jesus' head read: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
 38 Two thieves were also crucified with Jesus, one at his right hand, and the other on his left.
 39 Those that passed by wagged their heads and cursed Jesus, saying:
 40 You who can destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days--if you *are* the Son of God, come down from that cross [and prove it]!
 41 The Sadducee priests, the Torah teachers, and other religious elders of Israel also mocked, saying:
 42 He saved others, but he can't save himself! If he is the King of Israel, let him come down off that cross now, and we will believe him!
 43 He trusted in God, so let God deliver him now if He wants him! He said, after all, 'I am the Son of God'!
 44 The thieves crucified with him likewise railed in his face.
 45 Now from noon to 3 PM, there was a great darkness over all the area.
 46 About 3 in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*, which in Aramaic means: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*
 47 [Because the words for *My God* and the name of Elijah in Aramaic are both pronounced "Eli,,"] some thought Jesus was calling for Elijah.
 48 And immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, and dipped it in non-kosher vinegar wine. Then he put it on a stick and lifted it up to Jesus' lips to drink.
 49 The rest said: Leave him alone, and let's see if Elijah comes to save him!
 50 Jesus, when he cried out again in a loud voice, gave up the ghost.
 51 When he did, the great curtain sealing off the Holy of Holies was split in two from the top to the bottom, and the rocks split from a great earthquake!
 52 And some of the graves opened up, and many righteous people who had been asleep in death arose,
 53 And for a time after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city of Jerusalem and appeared to many people [before returning to their graves].
 54 Now when the centurion and some of his men watching Jesus saw the earthquake and what was happening, they were greatly afraid, and said: Truly this was the son of God!
 55 Many women were at the scene, watching from a distance. These were women from Galilee who were followers of Jesus, and had ministered to him.
 56 Among these was Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children, James and John.
 57 When dusk approached, there came a rich man from Arimathaea named Joseph who was a disciple of Jesus,
 58 He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate agreed, and gave permission for him to take the body.
 59 After Joseph received the body, he wrapped it in clean linen,
 60 And laid it in his own new tomb that had been carved

61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.
 62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,
 63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.
 64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.
 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.
 66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.¹⁴

out of the rock, rolling a large stone over the door. Then he departed.

61 And Mary of Magdala, and the other Mary [--mother of James, Joses, and Salome--] sat and watched over against the tomb.

62 The next day, which followed Preparation Day, the chief Sadducee priests and the Pharisees came in a group to Pilate.

63 They said: Sir--we recall that this deceiver said, while he was still alive, "After three days, I will rise again."

64 Command that the tomb be sealed and watched until after three days pass, lest his followers come by night and steal the body, saying to the people, "He has risen from the dead!" Then this last lie will be even worse than all the others!

65 Pilate said in response: You have your own Temple guards--use *them* and secure the tomb yourselves!

66 So they went and sealed the tomb, setting some guards to watch over it.

1. Note that the group handing Jesus over to Pilate is not made up of the common Jewish people, but the religious leaders and their cronies.

2. As discussed earlier, the word for "**repented**" here is not *metanoia* but *metameloai*, meaning Judas was moved by emotion and regret over the circumstances he was in, not that he had come to a heartfelt repentance.

3. Judas may have been trying to undo the "sale" of Jesus by attempting to return the money to the Temple. Leviticus 25:29-30 illustrates a concept in the Torah that a man who sells a house in a walled city can rescind the sale within one year after purchase by returning the money. If he couldn't find the purchaser (who would often hide), then he was permitted to deposit the money with the Temple treasury, and thus rescind the transaction. Otherwise, this verse is interesting in that it indicates Judas cast the money into the actual Holy Place, outside the Holy of Holies. Only a priest would have been able to come this close to the true Temple, suggesting that Judas was from a priestly background.

4. Blood money, according to the Law, could only be used for public works, hence the reason the potter's field is purchased.

5. Skeptics point out this is a paraphrase of Zec. 11:12-13, not Jeremiah. However, this paraphrase, combined with the idea of purchasing a field, does relate to Jer. 32:6-15, and the fact the Jeremiah spoke of potters who lived in this area (where the dead were buried) in Jer. 18 and 19, may have caused Matthew to relate this prophetically to Jeremiah. Some have otherwise speculated that a few of the books of the prophets were grouped together with Jeremiah's long book, and Zechariah was among these. (It was custom in such a case to list the name of the most prominent prophet even if referring to the writings of a lesser prophet.) Thus, Matthew would be referencing the overall body of work within the scroll containing Jeremiah and some of the minor prophets.

6. There is no historical evidence outside of Christian sources that such a custom existed. However, the 2nd century *Diatesseron*--the first harmony of the Gospels, which has some additional ancient information the regular Gospels do not contain--indicates this custom was followed at all the major Feasts, not just Passover.

7. This may have been offered to Jesus by the women followers of His who were present at the Crucifixion, for the Talmud records that the women of Jerusalem would offer wine and myrrh to condemned criminals to lessen their pain. Jesus refuses, as He must retain all His faculties during the Crucifixion.

8. John 19:19 records that this sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. In his book, *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan*, author Peter Michas makes an interesting speculation that the actual wording of this sign in Hebrew would have been:

Yeshua Hanatzri Vemelech Hayehudim
(Jesus the Nazarene and king of the Jews)

If true, the first letter of each word would have spelled out YHVH, the name of God!

9. Although not in the Protestant canon, the apocryphal Book of Wisdom has an extraordinary prophecy that seems to have a direct tie-in to Matthew's Gospel:

Therefore let us lie in wait for the righteous; because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressions of our education.

He professeth to have the knowledge of God: and he calleth himself the child of the Lord.

He was made to reprove our thoughts.

He is grievous unto us even to behold: for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion.

We are esteemed of him as counterfeits: he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness: he pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed, and maketh his boast that God is his father.

Let us see if his words be true: and let us prove what shall happen in the end of him.

For if the just man be the son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hand of his enemies.

Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness, and prove his patience.

Let us condemn him with a shameful death: for by his own saying he shall be respected.

Such things they did imagine, and were deceived: for their own wickedness hath blinded them.

--Wisdom 2:12-21

10. Apparently, one of the thieves repented (Luke 23:40). Otherwise, there are different theories offered to explain why Matthew's and Mark's Gospels show the thieves as mocking Christ, while Luke's shows one of them repentant. The only reasonable scenarios are that one thief repented, or that Matthew--who was not there--was relating what he incorrectly believed to have happened. Mark then picked this up and repeated it in his own Gospel. Of course, the latter theory calls into question the inerrancy of Scripture, and so most Christians will adhere to the first theory. Since none of us was there, no one can make an infallible claim that one of the

thieves could *not* have repented during the six hours he was on his cross.

11. The “9th hour” was 3 PM--the same time as the Passover Lamb was by the High Priest.

12. There is a common misconception that there was a single thick curtain covering the Holy of Holies. In fact, there were two, juxtaposed to each other, and the High Priest passed through them in a zigzag pattern. The curtains were so large and heavy that it took 300 priests to handle them during ritual immersions for purification! The word here for “**veil**” refers to the inner curtain closest to the Holy of Holies. While Jewish history does not record the tearing of the veil, it does record that in 30 AD the doors of the Temple swung open of their own accord, which was taken as a bad omen (although this could be an altered version of what the Gospels record--or even an additional fact the Gospels omit--for, in both cases, one could view the event as symbolic that the way had been opened for God to now come down to dwell with mankind).

More ominously, it had been the practice during *Yom Kippur* to tie a scarlet woolen thread to the horns of the Azazel goat, which carried off the sins of the people into the wilderness (though the goat was actually pushed off a cliff to its death). According to tradition, the scarlet thread would turn white to show that the sins of the nation had been cleansed. However, as the Gemara (Yoma 39b) records in its statement regarding both incidents: *The rabbis taught that forty years before the Temple was destroyed, the lot never came up in the right hand, the red wool did not become white, the western flame did not burn, and the gates of the Temple opened of themselves.* This would have been 30 AD, the probable year of the Crucifixion. Apparently, from that point on, the scarlet thread never turned white again!

13. An incredible, yet puzzling, statement. Only in Matthew’s Gospel is this miracle recorded, and it stretches credulity to imagine the other Gospel writers would omit the event. There is no good corroboration of this miracle from any other source, but the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus identifies two of those who arose as the sons of Simeon the just, who blessed the baby Jesus, and adds that those in this temporary resurrection returned to their graves three days later. However, there is no question as to its legitimacy, though some false teachers try to relegate it to a lie by claiming it is merely “apocalyptic language,” and thus not an actual occurrence. However, this *real event* is the basis of Paul’s statement in 2 Tim. 2:18 that some equally false teachers of his day were claiming the resurrection had already occurred.

14. These were probably Temple guards, not Romans. Levitical guards would have no authority outside the Temple, thus needing Pilate’s permission to set up a watch. The penalty for sleeping on duty for *Romans* was beheading, and it is doubtful the High Priest could have influenced Pilate in sparing any of his own men who had committed an unforgivable breach of military discipline.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 28

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

5 And the angel answered, and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

14 And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught:

MATTHEW CHAPTER 28

1 Early Sunday morning at the Sabbath’s end, Mary of Magdala, and Mary [--mother of James, Joses, and Salome--] went to see the tomb.

2 And a great earthquake happened, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled the stone away from the tomb. Then he sat down upon it.

3 His face was like lightning, and his garment was white as snow,

4 And the terrified guards fainted dead away at sight of him.

5 Then the angel said to the women: Don’t be afraid! I know you seek Jesus, who was crucified.

6 He is gone, for he is risen as he said he would! Come and see where the Lord was laying,

7 Then go quickly to his disciples, and tell them that he has risen from the dead and is waiting for them in Galilee, where they will see him. Lo, I have told you!

8 The women ran in awe and great joy from the place, intending to report to the disciples what they had been told.

9 But as they went to tell the disciples, Jesus met them, and said: Greetings to you all! And they fell down and held him by his feet, reverencing him.

10 Then Jesus said: Don’t be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, where they will see me.

11 Now as the women departed, some of the guards awakened and went into Jerusalem to tell the chief Sadducee priests what had happened.

12 Then the tribunal was hastily assembled once more, and after a discussion decided to pay a great deal of money to the guards,

13 Saying: Make sure your story is that you fell asleep, and Jesus’ disciples stole the body in the night.

14 If any heat comes down to you from Pilate, we’ll back you up, and intercede for you.

15 So the men took the bribe and proclaimed this story, which is believed and claimed by the Jews to

and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.
16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.²
17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.³
18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
19 Go ye therefore⁴, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

this day.
16 Eventually, the eleven disciples made it to a mountain in Galilee where Jesus awaited them.
17 When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some [weren't certain what to think].
18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth.
19 As you go to the nations of the earth, teach the Gospel to them, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:
20 Teach them to observe all the things I have taught you, and remember--I will be with you always, even to the end of the world! Amen.

1. Once again, Jesus desires the apostles to leave Jerusalem and meet Him in Galilee, a command they'll ignore in unbelief.

2. After Jesus appears to them in Jerusalem, and reproaches them for their unbelief.

3. The word here for "**doubted**" means that some were uncertain. (Probably over whether it was really Jesus they were seeing.) Quickly enough, their doubt would disappear as He ascended into heaven.

4. The actual translation is better rendered: "**As you go.**"

Mark

The shortest of the Gospels, the Gospel of Mark is thought by some to date to as early as 40 AD, though commentators who dated it that early may have been basing that on the tradition that Peter came to Rome around 42 AD. That tradition likewise asserts that Peter was the guiding force behind Mark's record of the ministry of Christ. Most scholars, however, date the work to around 70 AD.

I differ from the majority opinion in that I question the notion that Matthew would ever have copied portions of his Gospel from Mark's, although a dispassionate textual analysis suggests that. To me, it is unreasonable to hold that Matthew, who had been present during the entire ministry of Christ, would make use of something written by Mark, who was present for little more than the events leading up to the Crucifixion. Eusebius (Hist. eccl., 111, xxxix, 16), quoted Papias as saying that Matthew wrote a collection of the oracles of Jesus in "the Hebrew language," and the existence of an early Aramaic Matthew might explain the apparent similarity between the two Gospels, and how the texts of Matthew we have can seem to be derived from Mark's Gospel. I suspect that Mark either employed an original copy of Matthew's Aramaic Gospel in the creation of his own Gospel (sometimes called the *Parker Hypothesis*), or else a Greek version of Matthew's Gospel that he condensed. Luke, who knew Mark, may have taken this document and added to it in the creation of his own Gospel. Finally, that Mark wrote to a Roman audience is indicated by 15:44 where a Latin spelling is used for the word *centurion*.

MARK CHAPTER 1

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;
2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.¹
6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts² and wild honey;
7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.
8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.
9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.
10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:
11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
12 And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness.
13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.
14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

MARK CHAPTER 1

1 **1**his is how the "Good News" regarding Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God began!
2 It was written in the scroll of the prophets, **Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.**
3 **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.**
4 John the Baptizer immersed people out in the wilderness, and proclaimed the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
5 And everyone from Judea and Jerusalem went out to be baptized by him in the Jordan river, [publicly] confessing their sins.
6 John dressed in a garment of camel hair with a leather girdle around his loins. He ate [carob] and wild honey.
7 And he preached, saying: There is one coming after me who is mightier than I am, whose sandal straps I am not even worthy to bend down and untie!
8 I have certainly baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!
9 It came to pass in the days of John's ministry that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by him in the Jordan.
10 And as Jesus came up out of the water, John had a vision of the heavens opening and the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus like a dove;
11 And a heavenly voice spoke, and said: You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!
12 Immediately after this, the Spirit compelled Jesus to go into the desert.
13 He was there for forty days, being tempted by Satan, and facing wild animals; and angels ministered to him.
14 Now after Herod Antipas had put John in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the "Good News" of

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.³
 16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.
 17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.
 18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.
 19 And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.
 20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.
 21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.
 22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.
 23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,
 24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?⁴ art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.
 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.
 26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.
 27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.
 28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.
 29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.
 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.
 31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.
 32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.
 33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.
 34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.
 35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.
 36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.
 37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.
 38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.
 39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all

the Kingdom of God,
 15 Saying: The time is here, and the Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent, all of you, and believe the Gospel!
 16 Now as Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Shimon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea from a boat, for they were fishermen.
 17 Jesus said to them: Come follow me, and I will cause you to fish for men!
 18 And they immediately left their nets behind, and followed him.
 19 When he'd gone a bit further down the shore, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his [younger] brother, who were also in a boat mending their nets.
 20 He immediately called them too, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired hands, and went with him.
 21 The group went to Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue, and taught.
 22 The people were amazed at his doctrine, for he taught as one who had authority, and not as the Torah teachers [who offered up opinion after opinion from the sages, living and dead, on what the Law meant].
 23 Now in the synagogue was a man with a demon who cried out:
 24 Let us alone! Why are you bothering us, Jesus of Nazareth? Are you here to destroy us? I know who you are--you are the Holy One of God!
 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying: Shut up, and come out of him!
 26 When the demon had thrown the man to the ground in convulsions, it screamed out and left him.
 27 Everyone was amazed, and wondered amongst themselves things like: What are we seeing? What sort of new teaching *is* this! He even has authority to command demon spirits, and they must obey him!
 28 And his fame immediately spread throughout Galilee and the region.
 29 After they left the synagogue, Jesus, James, and John went to stay at the house of Shimon and Andrew.
 30 There, Shimon's mother-in-law was sick with a fever, and they told Jesus about her.
 31 He came and took her by the hand, lifted her to her feet, and immediately the fever left. Then she prepared food for them.
 32 At sunset, a host of sick people, along with many who were afflicted by demons, were brought to the house.
 33 The whole city, in fact, was outside Shimon's door!
 34 Jesus healed many who were ill, and he cast out many demons, though he did not allow the demons to speak because they knew who and what he was.
 35 Hours before dawn, Jesus sought out an isolated place, and there he prayed.
 36 A while later, Shimon and the others followed after him.
 37 When they found Jesus, they told him: Everyone is looking for you!
 38 But Jesus said: Let us go instead to the next towns so I can preach there as well, for this is why I came.
 39 So Jesus preached in the synagogues throughout Galilee, and he cast out demons too.
 40 At one point, a leper came to him [and knelt down], pleading: If you will it to be done, you can cleanse me

Galilee, and cast out devils.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

of this disease!

41 Jesus, moved with compassion, extended his hand and touched him, saying: I do will it--so be cleansed!

41 [*Alternate reading*]: Jesus, irritated with him, extended his hand and touched him, saying: I do will it--so be cleansed!

42 As soon as he spoke this, the leprosy vanished, and he was cleansed!

43 Jesus curtly sent him on his way, telling him:

44 Don't say anything to anyone about this healing, but go to the High Priest and make the required offering in the Law for a cleansed leper. This will be a testimony for the priests [of what I am, and that miracles still happen].

45 But the man instead went and told everyone he saw. So many people descended upon Jesus after this that he could no longer go into any city, but had to retreat into the deserts; and people still came to him from every direction.

1. This shows an original pattern of baptism that is no longer followed: As the people repented, they would verbally confess their sins to those assembled. Then they would immerse in water three times.

2. As mentioned in the Matthew commentary, this is a mistranslation. *Carob pods* is the correct understanding, although locusts were kosher, and John would have eaten them when he could catch them.

3. It is interesting to note that here we have an absolute record of what Jesus was teaching the people: Repent! This is in contradiction to some popular teaching in the past few years that Jesus went around emphasizing that He was anointed.

4. Better paraphrased as: "*Why are you bothering us?*" Matthew 8:29, in the instance of the Gaderene demoniac(s), shows a similar question being asked, with the additional information that the demons know they are 'free' until a preset time in the future. It apparently came as a surprise to these demons that prior to the Last Judgment, Christ and those who would follow Him would overturn their authority and freedom.

MARK CHAPTER 2

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.¹

6 But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?²

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

MARK CHAPTER 2

1 After a few days, Jesus returned to Shimon's house in Capernaum. It didn't take long for word to spread.

2 And in no time there was a crowd so thick that they couldn't even fit through the door as Jesus preached the Message to them.

3 Four men, meanwhile, brought a paralytic man [who could not move off his bed].

4 But when they saw it was impossible to get near Jesus because of the throng of people, they went around back, climbed upon the roof of the house; then pried off the tiles of the roof above Jesus so they could lower the sick man down--bed and all--into the house!

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic man: Son--your sins are forgiven you!

6 But some of the Torah teachers sitting there who heard that were offended, and thought to themselves:

7 *Why does this man say blasphemous things?! Who but God can forgive sins?*

8 But Jesus immediately knew in his spirit what their thoughts were, and he answered by saying: Why are you debating such things inside your hearts?

9 Is it easier to say that a man's sins are forgiven than it is to tell a paralytic to

get up, pick up his bed, and walk?

10 But so that you can know that the Son of Man [--the *bar Enash* Daniel prophesied of--] has the authority on earth to forgive sins:

11 I say to you--get up, pick up your bed, and go back home!

12 And immediately he got up, picked up his bed, and walked out before the whole crowd! Everyone was dumbfounded, and glorified God, saying: We've never seen anything like this!

13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.
 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi³ the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.
 15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.
 16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?⁴
 17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
 18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?
 19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.
 20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.
 21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.
 22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.⁵
 23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.
 24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?⁶
 25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?
 26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar⁷ the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?
 27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:
 28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

13 Jesus went out again to the shore, where a crowd soon gathered about him, and he taught them.
 14 As he walked along, he saw [Matthew], son of Alphaeus, sitting at his tax-collecting booth, and he told him: Follow me! So he arose and followed him.
 15 That evening, as Jesus dined in [Matthew's] house, many tax collectors and unrighteous people--some of whom followed Jesus about as he traveled--sat with Jesus and his disciples.
 16 But when the Pharisee Torah teachers saw Jesus dining with tax collectors and sinners, they asked the disciples: How is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?
 17 When Jesus heard this, he said: The well have no need of a doctor; it's the sick who do! I came not to call the righteous to repent, but to call those who are sinners.
 18 Now both the disciples of John and the Pharisees, would often fast [and afflict their souls by rejecting anything pleasurable, while offering up many prayers]. Once, they were all fasting, and some [of John's disciples] came to Jesus to ask: Why do both the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?
 19 Jesus responded: Can the bridegroom's retinue fast [and mourn] while the bridegroom is in their midst? As long as the bridegroom is with them they cannot fast [for the joy they have].
 20 But soon enough, the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them. When those days come, they will indeed fast [and mourn].
 21 No one sews a patch of brand new cloth on an old article of clothing, for the new patch will shrink in the wash and tear an even bigger hole in the garment.
 22 Nor do men put fresh, fermenting wine in stiff old wineskins that can crack and spill the contents out. You put new wine into new wineskins.
 23 One Sabbath [during the Feast of Unleavened Bread], Jesus was passing through a wheat field, and as they walked along making a path, the disciples plucked some of the wheat heads to eat.
 24 Some Pharisees who watched this were offended, and said: Look there--why are they doing what is forbidden in the Torah on the Sabbath?!
 25 But Jesus responded: Have you never read what David did when he and his men were hungry, and had no food?
 26 How he went into the Tabernacle of God [when Abiathar was High Priest,] and ate the *shewbread* that the Law restricts to the priests? And how he gave some to his men as well? [Was God offended by this "transgression"?]
 27 Jesus concluded: The Sabbath came into existence to serve man; man did not come into existence to serve the Sabbath!
 28 Therefore, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath [with the right to determine what acts are, and are not, permissible to do on it].

1. Yet another instance where physical illness is clearly shown, in some cases, to be a result of sin. It is also interesting that Jesus seems to forgive the infirm man's sins on the basis of his friends' faith rather than the man's own.

2. Their thoughts are perfectly reasonable, and are a proof text to establish that Jesus was Himself God in the flesh.

3. Levi was apparently Matthew's Hebrew name. As noted in Matthew, he may have been a *mokhsa*, who could levy taxes at will in the area he supervised, taxing goods, charging tolls, enacting tariffs, and so on, while overseeing a number of underlings that directly collected the taxes due in everyday life.

4. In the time of Christ--and even today--an attitude had developed that the righteous must separate themselves from the unrighteous, and thus the religious elders of Judaism are amazed that Jesus fellowships with sinful people. Recall that in the Jewish mind, the "sinners" were those who either were non-religious, or else were somewhat religious but failed to obey either the written or Pharisee oral Torahs with sufficient zeal to mark them as truly righteous.

5. Back then, “**new bottles**” could refer to newly created leather wineskins, or else to pre-existing wineskins that were thoroughly immersed and washed in clean water, which rendered them usable once again.
6. As noted in the Matthew commentary, the Pharisees here are accusing the disciples of harvesting grain,* which is forbidden on the Sabbath. However, in Luke’s account of this event, we see that the group were rolling the grain in their hands to loosen the kernels for eating, which at the time was believed by the Galileans to be a technically permissible way to obtain morsels of food on the Sabbath if none was otherwise available. Note that Jesus does not personally do likewise.

* Actually, wheat. Not corn, as we know it.

7. This appears to be a scribal error that has crept into the text as Ahimelech was the High Priest at this time. Some early texts in fact do not include this portion of the verse in it. Note also the Pharisees do not mock Jesus for His “error.”

MARK CHAPTER 3

1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered¹ hand.

2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.²

3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians³ against him, how they might destroy him.

7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea,

8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

16 And Simon he surnamed Peter;

17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges⁴, which is, The sons of thunder:

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite⁵,

19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

MARK CHAPTER 3

1 Jesus again returned to the synagogue where there was a man with a deformed hand.

2. [Offended by his earlier Sabbath comments,] the religious leaders were also there to see if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath so they could have some accusation to make against him.

3 Jesus said to the man with the deformed hand: Stand forth!

4 Then he asked the religious leaders: Does the Law permit doing good on the Sabbath? Or does it permit doing evil? Does it allow saving life on the Sabbath? Or does it allow killing? But they would not answer.

5 After he had stared angrily at them, frustrated at their hard hearts, Jesus said to the man: Stretch out your hand! He did, and the hand was made whole like the other!

6 These Pharisees then left, and quickly made an alliance with a group of elite priests--supporters of the Herods--and they all debated how to destroy Jesus.

7 But Jesus and his disciples left for the shore of the lake, and a great multitude from Galilee and Judea followed him.

8 Crowds from Jerusalem, Idumea, from the east side of the Jordan River, and even Tyre and Sidon also joined them after hearing what great miracles Jesus was doing.

9 But Jesus ordered the disciples to find and keep a boat handy in case he was forced into the water by the crowd thronging him.

10 For people were being whipped into a frenzy at seeing Jesus healing many people, and hosts tried to get close enough just to touch him, because many had serious diseases.

11 Demon spirits, when they saw him, caused the people they inhabited to fall down before him, and they shouted: You are the Son of God!

12 But he sternly commanded them to keep silent, and not reveal who and what he was.

13 In time, he went up to a mountain calling for some of his disciples to follow, and they went with him.

14 He [laid hands on, and] ordained twelve, making them his [chief] disciples, that they might travel with him [and learn]; then he sent out to preach.

15 He also gave them the power to heal people, and to exorcise demon spirits.

16 And Jesus gave Shimon the surname of Peter--or *Rock*.

17 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, he dubbed *Thunderheads*.

18 The disciples also included: Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus [Jude], Simon the Canaanean [Zealot],

19 Along with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. [After

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.
 21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.⁶
 22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.
 23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?
 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.
 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.
 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.
 27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man⁷; and then he will spoil his house.
 28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme:
 29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.
 30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.⁸
 31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.
 32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.
 33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?
 34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!
 35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

they were all ordained,] they returned to a house in town.
 20 The multitude quickly assembled again, and Jesus and the disciples couldn't even find time to eat a snack.
 21 When Jesus' friends heard about all this, they tried to usher him away from the scene, saying: He must have lost his mind!
 22 Meanwhile, the Torah teachers from Jerusalem were saying: He is possessed by Beelzebub, and by the dark power of the prince of devils he is casting out all these demons!
 23 When he heard this, Jesus summoned the Torah teachers over and spoke parables to them, saying: Why would Satan cast out his own demons?
 24 If a kingdom is divided by civil war, it will fall.
 25 A family divided will not stand.
 26 And if Satan rises up against his own forces and turns against them, then he, himself, cannot stand--and is actually bringing about his own downfall!
 27 Look--no man enters into the house of a mighty man and takes his goods unless he first confronts the mighty man, overcomes him, and ties him up. Then he takes every item of value from the house with impunity.
 28 And I want you to know that all sins will be forgiven mankind, and all evil words they speak will also be forgiven.
 29 But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, for he is caught in an everlasting sin he cannot repent of.
 30 He told them this because they said, "He has a demon spirit!"
 31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent word for Jesus to come out.
 32 As the crowd sat around him, Jesus was told: Your mother and brethren are here, and want to see you.
 33 But he answered: Who are my mother and brethren?
 34 Then he looked about to those who sat around him [listening to his words], and said: These are my mother and brethren!
 35 For anyone who does the will of God is my brother, my sister, and my mother!

1. A strong word is used here meaning that the hand was totally shriveled up and crippled in such a way as to be noticeably deformed.
2. As noted elsewhere, this preoccupation with treating healing on the Sabbath as a sin suggests that these were probably Shammaiites. We might also point out their own hypocrisy in going out (which would be traveling on the Sabbath) and forming a plot against Jesus on the Sabbath when they should have been resting themselves!
3. *Herodians* were religious elders and priests with political ties to King Herod.
4. The precise meaning of the word here translated as "**sons of thunder**" is not fully known since it is not a true Greek word, but a transliteration from Aramaic. It may be that "Hotheads," "Thunderheads," or something similar may be closer to what Jesus was saying.
5. **Cannanean** (i.e., *Zealot*) is the correct translation.
6. The word translated as "**beside himself**" is better understood as, "lost his mind," or "gone stark-raving mad."
7. The "**strong man**" is the devil himself, and Jesus is here revealing that He--even at this point, before the cross--has taken authority over Satan.
8. There is some debate about just what constitutes the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit Jesus warns against. In the context here, knowledgeable Jewish elders have seen a divine miracle, and despite knowing in their hearts it is of God, attribute that miracle to the devil simply because they reject the Messenger. This is what Jesus seems to say is unforgivable. Perhaps the best point that can be made with respect to this sin is that it is unforgivable because it is not repentable: someone who has committed it has no concern over it, no desire to repent, and no desire to seek forgiveness, since that ability comes from the Holy Spirit's conviction in the first place.

MARK CHAPTER 4

1 And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

MARK CHAPTER 4

1 And Jesus began again to teach along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, but so many people came that he had to get into a boat and preach from a few yards out on the water as the crowd listened on shore.

2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,
 3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:
 4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.
 5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:
 6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.
 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.
 8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.
 9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
 10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.
 11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:
 12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.¹
 13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?
 14 The sower soweth the word.
 15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.
 16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;
 17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.
 18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,
 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.
 20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.²
 21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?
 22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.
 23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.
 24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.
 25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that

2 He used many parables in teaching his doctrine, including this one:
 3 Listen! A farmer went out to sow some seeds.
 4 As he sowed, some fell by the side of the road, and the birds came and ate the seed up.
 5 Some fell on rocky ground where there wasn't much soil, and the seed sprouted immediately because it lay on the surface of the dirt.
 6 But when the sun grew hot, it withered up and died because it had no roots.
 7 Some seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns choked the plants so that they gave no fruit.
 8 But some fell on good ground, and grew up to yield fruit: Some a little; some a lot; and some bountiful.
 9 Jesus said to them: He who is able to understand, let him understand.
 10 When Jesus was alone, [his followers] and the twelve apostles asked him what the parable meant.
 11 He replied: You have been given the privilege to understand the mysteries regarding the Messianic Kingdom, but those outside of our group do not have that privilege, and so I speak to them in parables,
 12 That [as was prophesied], *seeing they will see, yet not perceive; and hearing they shall hear, but not understand; lest at any time they should be converted and their sins forgiven.*
 13 Jesus added: Do you really not understand this parable? If not, how can you understand anything I am going to teach in parables?
 14 The sower sows the Message [of the Gospel].
 15 Those by the wayside represent people who hear the Message. But after they've heard it, Satan comes immediately to steal away the Message that was sown in their hearts.
 16 Likewise, the seed sown on stony ground represents people who hear the Message, and immediately receive it with joy,
 17 But they have no root of the Message in their hearts, so these endure for a time, but when trouble or persecution comes upon them for the sake of the Message, they immediately stumble [in their faith].
 18 The seed sown amongst the thorns represents those who hear the Message,
 19 But the burdens of this world, the lie that wealth is the answer to all problems, and the lust for possessions choke the Message so that it never bears fruit in their lives [because they set their priorities on these other things].
 20 But the seed sown on good ground represents those who hear the Message, receive it into their hearts, and bring forth fruit: Some a little; some a lot; and some bountiful.
 21 Jesus added: Is a candle meant to be put under a basket or to be hid under a bed? Isn't it meant to be put in a candlestick?
 22 So nothing is hidden without its eventually being meant to be revealed, and nothing is kept secret without the intent of its being known.
 23 If any man can understand what I mean, then let him understand!
 24 Jesus continued: Be sure to listen carefully: What you hear, and your degree of understanding of it, will affect how much revelation you will receive, and the more you understand, the more revelation you will receive.

which he hath.
 26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;
 27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.
 28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.
 29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.
 30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?
 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:
 32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.
 33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.
 34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.
 35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.
 36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.
 37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.
 38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?
 39 And he arose, and rebuked³ the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.
 40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?
 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

25 For he that has [understanding] shall be given more; and he that does not have [understanding] will have what little [revelation] he has taken from him.
 26 He added: This is why the Messianic Kingdom itself is akin to a farmer who sows seed into the ground,
 27 And then goes to bed and gets up every morning. The seed will grow of its own accord, and it doesn't matter that the farmer doesn't understand how that happens.
 28 For the *earth* will produce the growth--first, a blade of grass, then a sprout, and finally a full stalk of wheat.
 29 Then, when the fruit that sprang from the earth that birthed it is ripe, the farmer immediately goes out and puts the sickle to his harvest because the time has come for it.
 30 Jesus asked: What shall we compare the Kingdom of God to? What is it like?
 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of seeds on earth.
 32 But it grows to be among the largest of herbs, shooting out great branches the birds of the air nest in.
 33 With many parables like this, Jesus conveyed his doctrine as best as they were able to understand it.
 34 But he never spoke to the crowds without using parables. Then later, when they were alone, he would explain the meanings to his disciples.
 35 Now the same day as he spoke this parable, as dusk approached, he said: Let us go to the other side of the lake.
 36 After the crowds were sent away, they conveyed Jesus across the Sea of Galilee in a boat. A few other small boats followed as well.
 37 But a great storm arose, and the waves washed into the boat and threatened to swamp it.
 38 Jesus, meanwhile, was asleep at the stern, resting upon a cushion. They awakened him, and said: Master--don't you care that we're going to drown?!
 39 So Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and waves, saying: Peace! Be still! And the wind halted, and the sea became very calm.
 40 Jesus then asked the disciples: Why are you so afraid? How is it that you have no faith?
 41 Yet they feared greatly, and said to one another: What sort of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey his commands?!

1. This is one of the most difficult-to-understand verses in the New Testament. There is no way to be fully certain what Jesus means, and some have drawn some incorrect conclusions such as:

Jesus doesn't want the masses to understand Him, and be saved. Untrue, according to 2 Peter 3:9.

Jesus is deliberately teaching and speaking in a manner that will manipulate the Jews into rejecting Him so God can turn from the Jews and open the way to the Gentiles to receive Him. Untrue, according to Rom. 11:1.

To make an educated assessment on what Jesus actually means, we must first go back to Isaiah 6, which is the prophecy Jesus uses in this discourse:

6:8 **Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.**

6:9 **And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.**

6:10 **Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.**

This event occurs after God has repeatedly dealt with the rebellious king and nation of Judah, which is eventually to be taken captive by the Babylonians for its sins. It is less an intentional curse from God upon the people as much as it is God's finally stepping back and letting them reap the fruits of their refusal to repent, which will cause them to be blinded and unable to perceive the truth. Thus, God is giving them over to a type of 'reprobate mind' (Rom. 1:28). Jesus encounters the same stubborn rejection in verse 22 of the last chapter, and thus as He sits with His apostles speaking about "them that are without," He is referring to those who, in their stubborn pride and hard-heartedness, are both outside their group and outside of the Kingdom, for they have rejected the 'fountain of Living Water' that God has sent them. The Knox translation of the Vulgate may actually come closest to what Jesus means in its translation of verses 11 and 12: "And he said to them, It is granted to you to understand the secret of God's Kingdom; for those others, who stand without, all is parable*: so they must watch and watch, yet never see, must listen and listen, yet never

understand, nor ever turn back and have their sins forgiven them.”

* Probably meaning something along the lines of: “Those outside the Kingdom think these are just entertaining stories.”

2. An important verse showing that the net of salvation is open not only for the ultra-righteous (the 100 fold), but even the moderately righteous and obedient who receive the message of repentance, endure to the end, and yet follow Christ with less vigor than some of their brethren may.

3. The word used throughout the Gospels for casting out a demon, and thus it is possible that the storm was demonic in origin (Job 2:19).

MARK CHAPTER 5

1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.¹

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis² how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

MARK CHAPTER 5

1 So they made it to the country of the Gadarenes, across the Sea of Galilee.

2 When Jesus stepped out of the boat, a [naked,] man possessed by an unclean spirit ran out of the tombs and came up to him.

3 He lived there among the graves and tombs, and no one could restrain and bind him—even with chains!

4 They had often tried that with leg irons and manacles, and he would just tear them into pieces, then turn on those who tried to overcome him. The man simply could not be controlled or reasoned with.

5 Day and night, he would stalk about the hills and tombs, howling and making cuts in his flesh with sharp stones.

6 But when he saw Jesus in the distance, he ran up and knelt in obeisance.

7 He shouted out: What do I and you have to do with each other, Jesus--Son of the Most High God?! Swear by God that you won't torment me [if I go, for Judgment Day isn't here yet]!

8 He said this after Jesus told the demon: “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”

9 [Surprised at the demon's power,] Jesus asked him: What's your name? It answered: “Legion”--for there are many of us in here!

10 The demon then implored Jesus not to send him and his fellow demons out of the area.

11 Now there was a large herd of pigs feeding in the nearby hills.

12 And the demons begged Jesus, saying: Send us into those [unclean] pigs, that we may at least possess them!

13 Jesus agreed, and the demons went out from the man and possessed the pigs. Then the herd--numbering two thousand pigs--ran off a cliff and drowned in the lake!

14 The overseers of the herd saw this, and ran into town and the outlying area to spread word of what had happened. Then everyone came out to see for himself.

15 The people then approached Jesus and saw the man who had formerly been possessed by the legion of demons sitting down clothed and apparently in his right mind, and they were afraid.

16 Others who had seen the incident told the story of how the demons left the man and entered into the pigs.

17 But the people urged Jesus to go away from their territory.

18 Now when Jesus had returned to the boat, the former demoniac begged to go with him.

19 But Jesus said no, and told him: Go home, and tell your friends what a great thing the Lord has done for you, and how he had compassion on you.

20 So the man departed, and spread the tale throughout the “Ten Cities” region--and everyone was

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.
 22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,
 23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.
 24 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.
 25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,
 26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,
 27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.
 28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.
 29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.
 30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?
 31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?
 32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.
 33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.³
 34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.
 35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?
 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.
 37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.
 38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.⁴
 39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.
 40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.
 41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.⁵
 42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.
 43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it⁶; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

amazed [for they all knew about this wild man and were stunned at his deliverance].
 21 When Jesus sailed back to the other side of the lake, so many people were waiting on the shore that he could hardly even land and get out of the boat!
 22 Now one of the rulers of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, came and fell at Jesus' feet when he saw him,
 23 And pleaded with him, saying: My little girl is dying! Please come and lay hands on her so she will be healed; and she will live!
 24 So Jesus accompanied Jairus with the crowd following and thronging about him.
 25 Now there was a certain woman who had suffered from a uterine discharge for twelve years,
 26 Who had followed all the advice of the doctors, and spent every cent she had on medicine and painful cures--but she never improved, and actually got worse.
 27 Having heard about Jesus, she forced her way through the crowd behind him and reached through them to touch his prayer shawl.
 28 For she said to herself, *If I can but touch his clothing, I will be healed!*
 29 The moment she touched him, the bleeding stopped, she felt the change in her, and realized she was healed!
 30 Immediately Jesus halted, realizing that power had gone out from him. So he turned and looked all around, asking: Who touched my clothes?
 31 Puzzled, the disciples shouted back: You see that you're almost being crushed to death by this crowd, yet you're asking, "Who touched me"?!
 32 But Jesus kept looking around, trying to find the woman who had touched him.
 33 Then the woman, fearing and trembling, and knowing it was she Jesus was looking for, fell at his feet, and told him the whole truth.
 34 And Jesus answered: Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go with peace upon you, and be healed of your ailment.
 35 While he was speaking this, some from Jairus' house came up, and said: Your daughter has died. Why trouble the Master any further?
 36 When Jesus heard that, he said to Jairus: Don't give in to fear--just believe!
 37 And he wouldn't let anyone but Peter, James, and John the brother of James, accompany him.
 38 When he came to Jairus' house, he saw a great commotion being made by the weeping mourners.
 39 Upon Jesus entering, he said: Why are you making such a commotion? This girl is not dead, but only asleep.
 40 When they heard that, they laughed derisively. But after Jesus expelled them all from the house except for the girl's parents and his three disciples, he went to where the girl was lying.
 41 He took her by the hand, and said in Aramaic: *Little girl, arise!*
 42 And immediately the girl, who was twelve years old, arose and walked. Everyone there was shocked to the core.
 43 Jesus, however, warned them not to spread word of

this miracle, and he instructed them to give the girl something to eat.

1. An interesting verse showing a preview of the eventual time when, **"at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow."**

2. The *Decapolis*, or region of 10 cities, was comprised of Gadara, Scythopolis, Hippos, Pella, Philadelphia (today Amman), Gerasa, Dion, Kanatha, Raphana and Damascus, most of which were located in today's Jordan. It was a Hellenistic, not Jewish region, which is why pigs were being raised in the fertile lands around the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Jews did live here, however, and Jesus appears to want to minister to them. With limited available time, perhaps, He asks the redeemed demoniac to broadcast the miracle that was done for him so that the masses will hear and quickly gather on the other side of the lake where Jesus forthwith returns to minister.

3. She had good reason to fear. To reach out and touch a man while in her unclean state—which normally defiles a man—was a stoning offense. As David Stern points out, rather than her uncleanness defiling Jesus, His righteousness is actually transferred to her, healing the disease! Jairus, meanwhile, has taken a bold step of faith on his own, for by this time the elders may have ruled that anyone promoting the idea that Jesus was the Messiah was to be expelled from the synagogues (John 9:22). We can only imagine how the poor man must have been holding the stress in like a boiler as Jesus stops and the woman goes into the story of her illness, delaying His walk to Jairus' house.

4. The customary mourners of Eastern funerals, mourning less for grief than for tradition, which is why, in verse 40, they can instantly turn from wailing to sarcastic laughter.

5. This verse is usually said to prove that Jesus went around speaking Aramaic. However, it could show something different. Long before the first Aramaic quote here, Jesus is going around making statements like **"Your faith has made you whole,"** **"Your sins are forgiven you,"** **"Arise, and take up thy bed,"** etc. Nowhere are those statements quoted in Aramaic and then interpreted in Greek. But out of nowhere *here*, we suddenly have a transition in language where Jesus is quoted as saying, **"Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."** If Jesus has been speaking Aramaic the whole time, we must wonder why Mark would cite an Aramaic quote out of nowhere when every word Jesus has already been speaking has been in Aramaic, which Mark has already been translating into Greek anyway! We might thus speculate that Mark would only mention the Aramaic quote in *this* circumstance if the quote was out of the ordinary. Thus, Jesus may have been speaking some other language (perhaps Greek or classical Hebrew), then changed, in this instance, to Aramaic, and Mark makes that point. The same could hold true regarding the few other places Jesus speaks in Aramaic.

6. Why Jesus now does the opposite of what he did with the madman—commanding the parents not to broadcast the miracle—is impossible to know for sure. Perhaps, as noted earlier, He wishes to delay the ultimate confrontation with the elders that He knows lies ahead.

MARK CHAPTER 6

1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary¹, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief.² And he went round about the villages, teaching.

7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

MARK CHAPTER 6

1 Jesus now left Capernaum to return to Nazareth, and his disciples accompanied him.

2 When the Sabbath came, he taught in the synagogue, and many of the people were amazed, saying: Where did he get all this [knowledge and talent]? What sort of wisdom has been given to him that at his hands such incredible miracles are performed?

3 Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Miriam? The brother of James, Joses, Judah, and Simon? Don't we know his sisters? So the people were offended by him.

4 But Jesus responded: A prophet is not without honor—except in his own country, among his own family, and in his own house.

5 So he could do no great miracles there except for healing a few sick people by laying hands on them.

6 He was amazed at their lack of faith, so [instead of working miracles,] he went about the area, teaching in the villages.

7 Then he called the twelve and began sending them out in pairs, giving them the power to exorcise demon spirits.

8 He told them not to take anything for their journey except a staff. They were not to take so little as a scrap of bread, a sack, or any money in a purse.

9 They were only to take a pair of sandals and one set of clothing.

10 And he instructed them: Stay in whatever house you enter into until your work in that city is done, and you leave for elsewhere.

11 As for anyone who does not welcome you or receive your message—shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them when you leave. Truly, Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than *that* city will, come Judgment Day!

12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.³
 13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick⁴, and healed them.
 14 And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.
 15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.
 16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.
 17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.
 18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.
 19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:
 20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.
 21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;
 22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel,⁵ Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.
 23 And he swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.
 24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.
 25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.
 26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.
 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,
 28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.
 29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.
 30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.
 31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.
 32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.
 33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.
 34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

12 So they went out, preaching that men should repent.
 13 They also cast out many demons, and anointed many of the sick with oil, healing them.
 14 Finally, Herod Antipas heard about Jesus and all he was doing, because his reputation was spreading everywhere. And he said: This must be John the Baptist risen from the dead, and *that's* why he can do such miracles!
 15 But others said: "It is Elijah!" Or, "It is one of the ancient prophets returned, or else a new prophet *like* the ones in days of old!"
 16 But Herod was convinced it was John, and when he heard that said: It is John, whom I beheaded—he has risen from the dead for sure!
 17 For Herod Antipas had captured and cast John into prison for the sake of his brother Philip's wife Herodias, whom he had taken and married.
 18 John had condemned him for this, saying: The Torah does not permit you to marry your brother's wife [through using Roman divorce]!
 19 Therefore, Herodias held a grudge against John, and would have killed him, but she could not,
 20 For Herod feared John, realizing he was a holy and just man of God. He even watched over him, and liked to hear him regularly, though he was troubled by what John said. [Thus, Herodias was forced to bide her time.]
 21 Her chance finally came when Herod threw a banquet on his birthday, inviting all the chief officers, officials, and well-to-do businessmen in the region of Galilee.
 22 It was during the banquet that Herodias' young daughter Salome came in and did a striptease for Herod that pleased him and those sitting at the feast. Antipas exclaimed to her: Ask anything you wish, and I will give it to you!
 23 He was so worked up, he even swore: Whatever you ask, I will give it—even half my kingdom!
 24 So she went to her mother, and said: What should I ask for? Herodias told her: Ask for the head of John the Baptizer!
 25 So she ran back to the banquet and announced: I want you to bring me the head of John the Baptizer on a platter right now!
 26 Herod Antipas was exceedingly sorry to hear this, but for the sake of his pride before his guests, he had to honor his oath and accede to her request.
 27 So Herod Antipas immediately sent an executioner out to the prison to behead John and bring back his head.
 28 The executioner did this, and delivered John's head on a platter to the adolescent girl Salome who, in turn, presented it to her mother Herodias.
 29 When John's disciples heard about this, they came and took the body, laying it in a tomb.
 30 Meanwhile, Jesus' apostles returned in a group, and gave a report of all they had been doing and teaching.
 31 Jesus said: Let's go to some isolated spot for some privacy and rest. He said this because there was a constant flow of people following him everywhere, and no one had time to even eat.
 32 So they discreetly sailed off to a secluded place.
 33 But many who knew Jesus saw them leave and guessed where they might be going—so crowds from all the cities actually ran around the lake, beat the ship to where it was heading, and were there waiting for him!

35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

37 He answered, and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?⁶

38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.⁷

41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed⁸, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42 And they did all eat, and were filled.

43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46 And when he had sent them away, he departed unto a mountain to pray.

47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.⁹

51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.¹⁰

34 Moved with compassion as he exited the boat, Jesus began to teach many things to the vast crowd, because they were like lost sheep without a shepherd.

35 Now when night was about to fall, the disciples came, and said: This is an isolated area, and night is coming.

36 Send the people away to the villages to buy food, for they have nothing to eat.

37 Jesus answered: You feed them! They said back: [Shall we just create money out of thin air, and go buy them all dinner?!]

38 Jesus then replied: How much bread do we have amongst us? Go see. After the disciples checked, they answered: Five loaves, and a couple of fish.

39 So Jesus commanded the crowd to break into small groups and sit on the green grass.

40 So they sat down in groups of fifty and a hundred.

41 When Jesus had taken the loaves and fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed God. Then he broke up the loaves, dividing them and the fish among the disciples, and fed the crowd out of what was there.

42 Everyone ate until they were full,

43 And the leftover bread fragments and fish filled twelve baskets!

44 Moreover, the crowd that had eaten the bread numbered nearly five thousand men!

45 Just after this, he commanded the disciples to sail to Bethsaida, while he sent the crowds away.

46 After sending them away, Jesus departed to a mountain to pray.

47 During the night, the ship was on the lake, while Jesus was alone on shore.

48 He could see them rowing, but making no headway against the wind, for it was blowing against them. Around 3 AM, he then came out to them, walking upon the surface of the lake, and would have actually walked on by them!

49 But when they saw him walking on the water, they screamed in fear, thinking it was a ghost,

50 For they all saw him, and were terrified. But he immediately called out to them: Cheer up--it's me! Don't be afraid!

51 And he walked up, entered the ship, and the winds calmed down. To say everyone was amazed was an understatement!

52 For the miracle of the loaves hadn't even caused them to expect that Jesus could do such things, for they had hard hearts.

53 When they had crossed to where they were going, they were now again in the land of the Gadarenes, and there they landed.

54 On disembarking from the ship, everyone recognized Jesus.

55 This time, he was welcomed, and some ran to spread word. Then everyone from the area brought the bed-ridden to be healed when they heard where Jesus was.

56 And anyplace Jesus went--be it village, town, or the countryside--they brought out the sick to lay in the streets, and they begged to be permitted to touch his prayer shawl; and everyone who did that was healed fully!

1. The town is probably Nazareth. It is interesting to note that Jesus is referred to as "**the son of Mary**." This suggests that Joseph had been dead a very long time at this point or Jesus would still have been known as the son of Joseph.

2. The word here (*apistea*) indicates a lack of confidence in the person (i.e., Jesus). Jesus' cure for that is to teach the Scriptures in

an effort to help them grow in faith.

3. Once again, confirmation that every message of Jesus began with a call to repentance!

4. An interesting verse, showing that the normal pattern for supernatural healings apparently incorporated an anointing with oil rather than, for instance, simply commanding the sick to arise.

5. Though always portrayed as a seductive teenager, the Greek means Salome was a child or adolescent. Whether she did some sort of striptease, or danced a “cute” child’s jig that amused everyone cannot be known with certainty, but given the fact that John dies over the incident, the likelihood is that she was an adolescent doing an inappropriately sexual dance before the crowd.

6. This is months’ worth of wages, and the disciples are being sarcastic.

7. Some have suggested that Jesus, by breaking the people into groups no larger than 100, was establishing a guideline for how big church congregations should be.

8. Jesus blessed *God* in thanksgiving, not the food.

9. Here is the strongest indicator that Peter aided Mark in composing parts of his Gospel: the fact that Peter’s walking on the water, and nearly drowning, is left out. Peter apparently left out that part of the story, or Mark omitted it to keep from embarrassing Peter.

10. The tale of the woman with the issue of blood has spread, and now everyone wants to touch Jesus to receive healing.

MARK CHAPTER 7

1 Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?¹

6 He answered, and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.²

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.³

14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Harken unto me every one of you, and understand:

15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him⁴: but the things which come out of him⁵, those are they that defile the man.

16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without

MARK CHAPTER 7

1 About this time, a group of Pharisees and Torah teachers from Jerusalem came on the scene.

2 But when they saw some of the disciples eating bread with unclean hands—that is, without first performing a ritual hand washing and prayer—they criticized them.

3 You see, the Pharisees, and all the Jews of Judea, do not eat without regularly immersing their arms to the elbows, for this is a tradition instituted by the elders of Israel.

4 When they return from the marketplace, for instance, they will not eat unless they perform this ritual, called the *Nitilat Yada'im*. They also perform similar immersions upon cups, pots, bronze vessels, and tables [to make them ritually pure].

5 So these Judean Pharisees and Torah teachers asked Jesus: Why do your disciples not keep rabbinic tradition, and immerse their hands before eating?!

6 But Jesus answered them by saying: Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites when he wrote: **This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.**

7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

8 For, ignoring the commandments in the *written* Law, you elevate *oral* laws, like baptizing pots and cups, to even more importance than written commandments, and you do things like that all the time!

9 And he said: Yes, you cunningly rationalize ways for your *oral* laws to take precedence over the *written* Law!

10 For instance, Moses said, *See to the needs of your parents*; and, *Anyone who curses his mother or father must be put to death.*

11 But then *you* teach that if a man says to his father or mother: “My goods are *Korban* [—dedicated to the Temple—] and so I do not have to help you out of my own resources,” he is relieved from observing that commandment.

12 So you permit him to turn his back on the needs of his parents,

13 Thus making the command of God meaningless because of your oral tradition. You do a lot of things like this!

14 Then Jesus summoned the crowd, and told them: Listen to me and understand, whoever can.

15 There is nothing from outside a man that can defile him when it enters him; it’s what comes *out* of him that defiles him in God’s eyes.

understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs⁶.

28 And she answered, and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.⁷

31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

16 If you can understand--then understand!

17 When Jesus left the crowd and returned into the house he was staying at, the disciples asked him to explain what he meant.

18 He replied: Do you have no more understanding than those Pharisees? Do you not understand that a man cannot be defiled by things like the sort of food that he eats?

19 Because what he eats doesn't enter his heart, but his stomach, and eventually leaves him, going into the sewer. [Thus, Jesus pronounced all foods clean.]

20 [But what comes out of his mouth can defile his soul.]

21 For what comes out, comes from within the heart of man, where adultery, fornication, murder,

22 Theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lust, greed, blasphemy, pride and foolishness make their home.

23 All these evil things dwell in the heart of a man, and are what *really* defile him!

24 Jesus now left for the region of Tyre and Sidon, where he hoped to abide secretly in the house of someone there--but word got out,

25 For a certain woman, whose daughter was possessed by a demon, heard about him and came, falling at his feet.

26 She was a Gentile--a Syrophenician--and she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

27 But Jesus replied: Let the children eat their fill first, for it is not right to take their bread and simply toss it to the puppies.

28 She responded: True, Lord--but even the family dogs beneath the table get to eat the children's crumbs!

29 And Jesus answered: For saying this, go home--the demon is gone from your daughter.

30 When she returned home, she found it was so: The demon was gone, and her daughter was resting peacefully in bed.

31 And again leaving the area of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee by way of the "Ten Cities" region of Jordan.

32 At one point, they brought a man who was deaf and dumb; and they begged Jesus to touch him.

33 Jesus took him away from the crowd and put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit, and touched the spittle to the man's tongue.

34 Looking up to heaven, he sighed, then said in Aramaic: *Be opened!*

35 And immediately the man could hear, and was able to speak clearly!

36 Jesus told the man and his friends not to tell anyone about the miracle, but the more he told people to keep silent, the more they seemed to tell everyone!

37 And everyone who heard was utterly astonished, saying: Everything he does is done well! He can even make the deaf and dumb able to hear and speak!

1. There is a presupposition amongst the elders that the rulings of the Pharisees are binding upon all of Judaism, and they demand to know why Jesus and His followers are not falling in line with that understanding. As we will see from Jesus' following criticism, these Pharisees are followers of Shammai.

2. A valid criticism against both Judaism and many Christian groups that likewise uphold man-made doctrines as the commandments of God. Two examples are smoking and gambling, against which there is no biblical commandment whatever. Rather than exhorting Christians to avoid these activities as merely unedifying, some Christians elevate avoidance from such activities to commands of God upon which salvation may hinge. Other examples would include things like making the eating of meat on Friday a Mortal sin, to teaching that women who cut their hair, or wear jewelry, lose their salvation.

3. These may be Shammaiites, for Talmudic writings descended from the Hillelites directly condemn the practice of dedicating all

of one's goods to the temple. (Maimonides even considered one who did this to be a fool.) As the Shammaiites seem to have believed that one could not get out of a vow to the Temple (Nazir 9A), this explains how the giver could be "free" in the sense of being able to avoid the otherwise permissible means of overturning an oath: Appearing before three witnesses, and retracting it.

4. A denial that eating with unwashed hands defiles a person.

5. As shown in verse 21, the true defilement comes out of the heart, and the accompanying ungodly actions that follow its dictates.

6. There is a common misunderstanding that Jesus is calling the mother a "dog." The word is better translated as "puppy," and thus Jesus, in His initial denial to the woman, is referring to her daughter. This brings up the question of why Jesus is apparently so rude to the woman. The answer lies in the fact that the Gentiles, at this point in time, are relegated to the position of the enemies of God. Only after the Chosen People of Israel reject their Messiah are the Gentiles placed on equal footing with the Hebrews in the sense that both are now equally lost and out of covenant with God, and both must now come to God in the same manner--through repentance and faith. I suspect that there was also an object lesson for the Jews and the elders in this incident: Jesus wished to show that God could indeed hear the Gentile as well as the Jew--when the Gentile approaches with faith!

7. This woman, according to an ancient tradition, later commissioned a statue of Jesus to be carved--the only known image of Him ever made. The statue was destroyed in the 2nd century by one of the Roman Emperors.

MARK CHAPTER 8

1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

7 And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod¹

16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

MARK CHAPTER 8

1 Once, there was a great crowd gathered who had nothing to eat, so Jesus summoned the disciples, and said:

2 I worry for this huge crowd, because they have been with me for three days, and have nothing to eat.

3 If I send them home hungry, some may faint on the way since they may have come from a far distance.

4 But the disciples answered: What can we do? How could anyone get food enough to feed this crowd out here in the desert?

5 Jesus asked them: How many loaves do you have? They replied: Seven.

6 Then he commanded the people to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves and gave thanks to God. Then he broke them and began distributing them to the disciples to set before the people, and they did so.

7 They also had a few small fish, and after Jesus blessed God, he did the same thing as he had done with the bread, having the disciples hand them out to the crowd.

8 So everyone ate until they were full, and the leftovers filled seven baskets!

9 The crowd numbered about four thousand, by the way. After they had eaten, Jesus told them to return home.

10 Then Jesus took to sea again with the disciples and made his way to the region of Dalmanutha [on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, near Magdala].

11 There, some Pharisees wasted no time in interrogating him and demanding he produce a sign from heaven [to prove God was with him].

12 But Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit [for their hard hearts and blind eyes], and said: Why does this generation always demand a sign? I tell you truly, no sign will be given this generation!

13 So Jesus turned his back on them and re-entered the boat. He then sailed to the other side of the lake.

14 Now the disciples themselves had forgotten to bring any bread with them, and all they had in the boat was one loaf.

15 Jesus warned them, saying: Watch out! Don't eat bread yeasted by either the Pharisees or the Herodians!

16 The disciples didn't understand, so they murmured, speculating: Since we forgot to bring bread, he must mean we shouldn't buy any bread from the Pharisees or the Herodian priests.

17 When Jesus realized their train of thought, he said to them: Why do you think I'm talking about normal bread? Are you still not able to see past my language to the heart of what I mean? Are your hearts still hard?

19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.
 20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.
 21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?
 22 And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.
 23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit² on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.
 24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.
 25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.
 26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.
 27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?
 28 And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.
 29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.
 30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.
 31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.
 32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.
 33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.
 34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
 38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

18 *Having eyes, do you see not? Having ears, do you hear not?* Do you not remember what you've seen?
 19 How I broke up the five loaves to feed five thousand people? How many baskets were left after that? They replied: Twelve.
 20 And when I fed four thousand with seven loaves, how many baskets of leftover bread did you recover? They answered: Seven.
 21 So Jesus replied: How is it that you don't understand me then?
 22 When the boat brought Jesus to Bethsaida, upon his arrival some people brought a blind man up to him, begging Jesus to touch [and heal] him.
 23 Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of town. Then he put some spittle on the man's eyes, laid hands upon him, and asked if he could see.
 24 The man looked up, saying: I can see, but my vision is blurry--people look like trees moving about!
 25 Jesus again placed his hands upon the man's eyes and then bade him to look up. When he did, his sight was fully restored and he could see people clearly.
 26 Jesus then sent him back to his home, saying: Don't go into town, or tell anyone from the town about this miracle!
 27 Jesus and the disciples, meanwhile, made their way to Caesarea Philippi, and on the way Jesus asked them: Who are men saying that I am?
 28 They answered: John the Baptist, risen from the dead. Others say Elijah, or one of the other prophets.
 29 Jesus asked: But whom do *you* say that I am? Peter spoke up, and said back to him: You are the Messiah!
 30 Then he solemnly told them not to tell anyone this.
 31 He also began to teach them that the Son of Man would have to suffer greatly, and be rejected and killed by the elders of Israel, the chief priests, and the Torah teachers of the various factions. But after three days he would rise again.
 32 He said this clearly [without talking in a parable], and Peter took him aside, and started rebuking him.
 33 But when Jesus turned and saw the other disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying: Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking man's way, not God's!
 34 And he called both the people and his disciples to him, saying: Whoever chooses to follow me must take up his cross and follow me!
 35 For whoever will save his own life [by living his own way], will lose it in the end; but whoever shall lose his life for my sake, and the Gospel's, shall save it.
 36 For what profit is there to gain the world but lose one's eternal soul?
 37 What price will a man sell his eternal soul for?
 38 So whoever shall be ashamed of me and my teachings in this [spiritually] adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man also be ashamed when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels!

1. Apart from many being hypocritical, the leaven of the Pharisees--their teachings--was predominantly that rabbinic tradition was equal in authority to Scripture (which overturned it), along with their conscious denial that they were sinners because of their zeal in obeying the commandments. The leaven of "**Herod**" (actually, the text should read *Herodians* as Matt. 16:6 shows the comment relates to the Sadducees, and not to Herod personally) was that he and his Sadducee followers had aligned themselves with the Romans, thus compromising themselves and God's truth with the world.

2. At the time, spit was thought to have some medicinal properties, but Jesus' reason for using it in the healing--and why the healing was accomplished in two stages--is a mystery.

MARK CHAPTER 9

1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.¹

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

5 And Peter answered, and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

12 And he answered, and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things²; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come³, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17 And one of the multitude answered, and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since

MARK CHAPTER 9

1 And he added: Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not see death before they glimpse the Kingdom of God come in power!

2 Six days after this, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him up onto a high mountain by themselves--and he was transfigured before their very eyes!

3 His clothing shone white as snow--so white, in fact, that no bleached garment on earth could compare to it!

4 Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with him!

5 Peter, dumbfounded, blurted out to Jesus: Rabbi, it is good for us to be here! We'll make three shelters--one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!

6 But he really didn't know what to say because they were all terrified.

7 Then a cloud overshadowed them and a heavenly voice came forth that said: This is my beloved Son--listen to him!

8 In the next instant when they looked up, they saw no one else, for only Jesus was there with them.

9 And as they descended the mountain, he told them to say nothing of what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

10 They did keep the secret, but the disciples kept wondering amongst themselves what "rising from the dead" meant. [For their minds were closed so they could not fully understand Jesus' words.]

11 They finally asked him: Why do the Torah teachers say Elijah must come before the Messiah?

12 Jesus answered: Truly, Elijah will return and make everything right again. And it's also written that the Son of Man will endure much suffering and be treated badly [before entering into his kingdom].

13 I also say that Elijah has already come, but they did as they wanted with him, as the Scriptures said they would.

14 Now when Jesus returned to the other disciples waiting with the crowd in the valley below, he saw some Torah teachers questioning them.

15 When the people saw Jesus, they were very amazed, and ran up to greet him.

16 But Jesus queried the Torah teachers: What are you arguing about with them?

17 A man in the crowd answered: Master, I brought my son who has a demon of muteness [and epilepsy].

18 And whenever the demon manifests, it causes him to writhe about, gnash his teeth, and fall comatose. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.

19 Jesus answered them: O faithless generation! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you [and your weakness of faith]? Bring the boy to me.

20 So they brought the boy, and when the lad saw Jesus, the demon in him caused an immediate epileptic fit, and he fell down frothing at the mouth as he convulsed.

21 Jesus asked the father: When did this first start? The man answered: Since he was a young child.

22 And it often causes him to fall into the fire, or into the waters to drown him--so if *you* can do anything, please have mercy, and help us!

23 Jesus replied: [If *I* can do anything?] If *you* can *believe*, all things are possible!

24 Then the father burst into tears, and said: Lord, I

this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.
 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.
 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.
 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.⁴
 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.
 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.
 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.
 28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?
 29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.⁵
 30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.
 31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.
 32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.
 33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?
 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.⁶
 35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.⁷
 36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,
 37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.
 38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us:⁸ and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.
 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.
 40 For he that is not against us is on our part.
 41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.
 42 And whosoever shall offend⁹ one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.
 43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better

believe--help the part of me that doesn't!
 25 When Jesus saw the whole crowd now running up, he rebuked the foul demon with these words: You deaf and dumb spirit, I order you to come out, and never return into him!
 26 The demon screamed, and caused him to writhe all the worse. Then it was gone, and the boy seemed to be in a coma. Many even said: He is dead!
 27 But Jesus grasped his hand, lifted him up, and the boy got to his feet.
 28 When Jesus had returned to the house that was his headquarters, the disciples asked him privately: Why couldn't we cast it out?
 29 He replied: One like this won't come out without intense prayer [and fasting].
 30 Eventually they left the area, and Jesus hoped to discreetly travel through Galilee.
 31 For on the way he taught the disciples, and told them: The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him--but after they kill him, he will rise again on the third day!
 32 But they did not comprehend his words, and were afraid to ask for an explanation.
 33 Now after Jesus had returned to Capernaum, the disciples eventually joined him. When they entered the house he was in, Jesus asked: What were you arguing about on your way here?
 34 But they hemmed and hawed and kept silent, because on the road they had been debating which of them should be considered the most important disciple.
 35 So Jesus sat down and called the twelve, saying: If any man wants to be the most important, he must make himself the least of all, and the greatest servant of all.
 36 Then Jesus took a child and set him before them, and taking him into his arms, said:
 37 Whoever receives a child like this receives me as well. And whoever receives me, actually receives not me but [God] who sent me!
 38 John now spoke up, saying: Master--we saw a man exorcising demons in your name, and we told him to stop doing that because he wasn't a part of our group.
 39 But Jesus answered: Don't stop him! No man can do a miracle in my name and then just go out and denounce me.
 40 Anyone who's not against us is for us!
 41 And truly, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will in no way lose his reward.
 42 But whoever causes one of the little ones who believes in me to stumble--well, it would be better if an [anchor] were tied to his neck, and he was thrown into the sea to drown.
 43 So if your hand causes you to sin--cut it off! It's better to enter into life maimed, than to have two good hands and be cast into hell--and the fire that shall never quenched.
 44 Where [--as you've heard in the legends of sinners who are eaten by maggots every day, over and over again--] the maggots do not die, nor does the fire go out!
 45 So if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off! It's better to enter into life a cripple, than to have two good legs and be cast into eternal hellfire,
 46 Where the maggots [of the tormented] do not die, and

for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched¹⁰:

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.¹¹

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.¹²

50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

the fire does not go out!

47 Likewise, if your eye makes you to sin--pluck it out! Better to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two good eyes, and be cast into hell's fire,

48 Where the maggots of the lost do not die, and the fire does not go out!

49 For the fire of God will purify everyone, even as salt draws out the lifeblood from a sacrificial offering. [Thus, the life from you will be drawn out until you have died to yourselves and become a pure sacrifice in God's eyes, while the wicked will be consumed.]

50 Now salt is a good thing, but what can be done with it if the salt loses its flavor? Keep your flavor pure, and live in peace with each other [instead of arguing over who is the most important].

1. This was no doubt one of the statements of Jesus that some misunderstood as teaching His return would be imminent--and certainly within the lifetime of John (John 21:23). Jesus probably desired it to be so, for by consciously believing they had only a few years to work--instead of 2000 years--the apostles worked all the harder in evangelizing the world.

Skeptics, however, like to seize upon Jesus' words as somehow false, for those hearing Him indeed died before the prophesied return of Christ. First, they make the mistake of presuming that Jesus is talking about the literal fulfillment and physical establishment of the Kingdom when He is probably talking about the release of the Spirit during Pentecost, which ushers in the Age of the Church. In any event, the statement is still technically true because John later is shown visions of the Messianic Kingdom and thus does "see" that Kingdom coming in power. Others would hold that the vision following this chapter showed a glimpse of Christ in all the power of the Messiah, and fulfilled His words.

2. Rev. 11:3. Most theologians agree that Elijah is one of the *two witnesses*.

3. Referring to John the Baptist, who came with the same anointing and authority of Elijah despite the fact that he did absolutely no miracles during his life.

4. It is difficult to comment on the theological implications of: "I believe; help thou mine unbelief," but the incident reflects the mercy of Christ, for while the man's unbelief was the same sort that the people of Capernaum had (*apistea*), he at least humbles himself and expresses *some* faith in Christ rather than rejecting Him as the people did earlier.

5. We know from chapter 2, verse 18 that the disciples did not fast. Jesus here seems to be indicating that while they need not fast as a commandment, there is greater power available through fasting and prayer that some situations in their lives will call for. It should be noted that the earliest manuscripts do not mention fasting, so some believe this was added in later centuries. Assuming that to be true, the correct teaching of the text was that the disciples could not cast out the demon because they had been lax in their prayer life.

6. "Greatest" in the sense of temporal authority in the Messianic Kingdom they expect Jesus to imminently usher in. This constant jockeying for position in the group may provide some understanding of Judas' eventual betrayal. It may have been a Machiavellian move to force Christ's hand--in which case He must triumph (in Judas' mind) if Christ is indeed the Messiah--and if He is not, then Judas would curry favor with the Sadducees and become a hero for helping to defeat a false prophet.

7. This is a concept the group just cannot grasp. In their minds, they look forward to positions of authority as ministers in the court of a conquering king, rather than as servants headed for suffering and martyrdom.

8. The strongest verse in the New Testament to destroy the notion that there is only one acceptable denomination while others are excluded as illegitimate.

9. "Offend" means to entice into sin.

10. The end of the verse reads, more literally: "To go off into the Gehenna, into the fire the inextinguishable." The word translated "never shall be quenched" is *asbestos*! We can thus see that the verse helps to confirm the idea that the lost will be cast into hellfire and *not be consumed* in the same way that asbestos can be placed in fire and yet will not burn.

11. In Jewish oral tradition was a belief that hell had different levels to it, one of which contained the souls of sinners who would be bound and eaten alive by worms (maggots). The process would then re-start each day. Jesus is thus clearly affirming that hell is not simply a place where the souls of the sinners are consumed and then end their existence; but is eternal torment with no end. And so, while the reference is partially to the local garbage dump, along with being a quote from the last portion of Isaiah, it also touches on some Jewish beliefs about eternal punishment.

12. Salt was used in Temple sacrifices to draw the blood out of sacrificial animals before they were used as burnt offerings. Jesus may be saying something along the lines that a godly man will undergo the trials of life (fire) that will draw forth the life and power of God in him, just as the salt in the Temple draws forth the blood in the sacrifice to make it pure and acceptable; and/or He could be referring to the judgment of 1 Cor. 3:13.

MARK CHAPTER 10

1 And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he

MARK CHAPTER 10

1 Jesus then arose and left the area, arriving at the border of Judea at the farther side of Jordan. The people, as usual, came to him; and as he always did, Jesus reiterated

taught them again.

2 And the Pharisees¹ came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

3 And he answered, and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5 And Jesus answered, and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.²

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.³

12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.⁴

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.⁵

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered, and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.⁶

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words.⁷

But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom

his doctrines to them.

2 Eventually the Pharisees came up, hoping to trick him. They asked: Do you agree that the Law allows a man to divorce his wife if he deems it necessary?

3 Jesus answered: What is your understanding of what Moses ordered about divorce?

4 The Pharisees replied: Moses allowed a man to write a Bill of Divorce, and to put her away.

5 Yes, Jesus agreed, he said that--but he wrote it into the Law because of your hard and stubborn hearts.

6 From the beginning of time [and the Garden of Eden, divorce was never a part of God's plan, and] *He created man as male and female.*

7 *That's why a man shall leave his father and mother, and become one with his wife;*

8 *And they shall no longer be two separate people, but one flesh.*

9 So what God has joined together, man must not tear apart.

10 When Jesus entered back into a house he was staying at, the disciples asked him for more clarification on the matter of divorce.

11 He told them: A man who divorces his wife and marries another person commits adultery against his original wife.

12 Likewise, if a woman [--Herodias, for example--] divorces her husband and marries another, *she* commits adultery.

13 Now some mothers brought small children to Jesus so he would lay hands on them [and bless them], but the disciples were offended at this, and rebuked them.

14 When Jesus realized this, he was angry at them, and said: You let the little children come to me, and don't stop them--for the Kingdom of God is made up of ones just like them!

15 And I tell you truly, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God just like a little child will never enter it!

16 Then Jesus took the children into his arms, laid hands on them, and blessed them.

17 Now later, when he was leaving the area, a man ran up the road and kneeled, asking: Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

18 Jesus replied: Why call any man "Good" when only *God* is good?

19 However, you know the commandments: Don't commit adultery; Don't kill; Don't [kidnap or rob]; Don't lie about others; Don't cheat; Honor, and take care of your parents.

20 The man answered, and said: Master, I have done all these things from my youth.

21 Jesus looked back, and his heart went out to him in love. He said: You only lack one thing: Go, sell whatever you have, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, take up the cross, and follow me!

22 The man was sad at hearing this, and left with his head hung low, for he had great possessions.

23 Jesus looked around, then said to the disciples: Only with difficulty will people with riches enter into the Kingdom of God.

24 The disciples [--who, like everyone, thought prosperity was a sign of God's favor--] were amazed at hearing this. Jesus reiterated: Children, it is very hard for those who trust in wealth to enter into the Kingdom of

of God.

26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered, and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

32 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of

God!

25 It is easier for a rope to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

26 Now the disciples were *really* shocked, and said among themselves: Who can be saved then?!

27 Jesus, looking back to them, said: With men, it is impossible, but not with God--for with God, *anything* is possible!

28 Peter began saying: Look at us... we have left all, and followed you--

29 Jesus spoke up: Truly I tell you, there is no man who has forsaken his house, his brothers, his sisters, his parents, his wife, or even his children or lands for my sake and that of the Gospel,

30 Who will not receive back, in *this* lifetime, a hundredfold houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands--along with persecution--and in the Messianic Age eternal life as well!

31 But many who are most important in the here-and-now will be the lowest-of-the-low then; and those least esteemed now will be the most important then!

32 Now as they were going along the road to Jerusalem with Jesus leading the way, a feeling of unnatural dread and concern came upon the disciples. So Jesus took the twelve aside and began to elaborate on what was ahead of him.

33 He said: We are near Jerusalem now, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief Sadducee priests and the Torah teachers. They will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles.

34 The Gentiles will then mock him, whip him, and spit upon him before killing him--but on the third day he will rise again.

35 [Despite the gravity of what lay ahead,] James and John, Zebedee's sons, came up to Jesus, and said: Master, we want you to agree to do whatever we ask of you.

36 Jesus replied: And just what is it that you two want me to do for you?

37 They responded: Grant that the two of us can sit at your right and left hands [as the highest officials in your glorious Kingdom].

38 But Jesus replied: Do you have any idea what you're asking?! [Do you know the price that comes with that?!] Can you drink from the cup I must drink from, and endure the baptism I must undergo?!

39 They said: We can! Then Jesus replied: Well, you *will* drink from that cup, and you *will* share the baptism I must undergo.

40 But to sit on my right or left hand is not mine to give, but [God has in mind those who will occupy those positions].

41 When word made its way back to the other ten about this, they started to get furious at James and John.

42 But Jesus summoned the disciples, and said to them: You know that among the Gentiles, everyone tries to lord it over everyone else; and the higher you climb, the more you trod upon those beneath you, treating them as your servants.

43 [As I said before:] Among you, it must not be that way! Whoever wants to be important must be servant to the others.

people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.
 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.
 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace:⁸ but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.
 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.
 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.
 51 And Jesus answered, and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord,⁹ that I might receive my sight.
 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.¹⁰ And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

44 And the most important of you must be the greatest slave of all.
 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve others, and give his life to ransom many.
 46 Now they came to Jericho, and as he departed with the disciples, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the side of the road, begging.
 47 When he asked what the commotion was, and heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he cried out: Jesus, Son of David--have mercy on me!
 48 Many of the crowd told him to be still, but he shouted out all the louder: You who are the Son of David, have mercy on me!
 49 Jesus heard, and halted. Then he commanded that the man be brought up to him. They ran, and told bar Timaeus: This is your day--get up, for Jesus is calling you!
 50 So bar Timaeus cast away his cloak, and arose. Then he stumbled toward Jesus.
 51 Jesus said to him: What is it that I can do for you? Blind bar Timaeus answered: Great Rabbi--let me receive my sight!
 52 Jesus responded: Go your way--your faith has made you whole! And immediately, bar Timaeus received his sight and followed down the road behind Jesus.

1. "The Pharisees" is not necessarily a precise translation. "Some Pharisees" would be equally allowable, for this particular group is most likely some Hillelites, who were very liberal on the issue of divorce.
2. A critical verse showing that not all of the Torah came directly from God, but that Moses had his own authority to create parts of it (with God's approval, of course).
3. Meaning that a man who divorces his wife so that he will be free to marry another is committing adultery.
4. A direct reference to the fact that Herod's wife Herodias had used Roman law to divorce her husband and marry Herod since Jewish Law forbade it. The context is the same as the point above: It is forbidden to divorce in order to marry someone else. Divorce for other reasons outlined both by Christ and Paul is permissible in some cases, and, as Paul says, the believer "is not under bondage" in that event (1 Cor. 7:15).
5. A controversial statement used by some who deny the Deity of Christ. As Jesus affirms He is the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:14), He is ultimately making the point that He is God. Additional confirmation of the fact is found in John 14:13, where Jesus promises to answer prayers made to Him in His Name. If Jesus were anything short of God, this would be blasphemy.
6. What a shame this man did not respond to Christ's call. As Jesus is only recorded as saying the words "follow me" to those He called to be apostles, this man would almost certainly have become an apostle, and probably Judas' replacement if not the one who would have embarked on Paul's mission to the Gentiles.
7. Because material prosperity was viewed as a sign of God's blessing and acceptance of a person.
8. Possibly not so much because he was shouting, and more for the fact he is using a Messianic title about Jesus after the elders have largely rejected Him and begun putting out of the synagogue those who follow Christ.
9. The word for "Lord" is not the usual one, but refers to a major rabbi.
10. Bartimaeus' faith probably not only encompassed his belief that Jesus could heal, but recognition that Jesus was also the Messiah.

MARK CHAPTER 11

1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,
 2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.
 3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.
 4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.
 5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?
 6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

MARK CHAPTER 11

1 When they approached Jerusalem and arrived at the villages of Bethany and Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent out two disciples,
 2 Saying to them: Go into the village there, and as soon as you enter it you will find a young donkey upon which no man has ever sat. Untie it, and bring it back here.
 3 If anyone asks, "Why are you doing that?," just say: "The Lord has need of him, and will send him right back here."
 4 So the two went, and it happened just as Jesus said: A donkey was tied up next to the door of a house at the crossroads, and they untied it.
 5 Sure enough, some who were standing around [--thinking they were thieves--] demanded to know: What do you think you're doing, untying that donkey?!
 6 The disciples answered as Jesus had told them, and

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.
 8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.
 9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:
 10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.
 11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.
 12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:
 13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.
 14 And Jesus answered, and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.
 15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves;¹
 16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.²
 17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.
 18 And the scribes and chief priests³ heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.
 19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.
 20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.
 21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.⁴
 22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.
 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.
 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.
 25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.
 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.⁵
 27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,
 28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

the men let them go.
 7 So they brought the donkey to Jesus and spread their cloaks upon its back, and Jesus sat upon it.
 8 Many of the crowd began to lay their cloaks on the road before the beast, while others cut down tree branches and laid them down on the road as well.
 9 And those who went on ahead of Jesus, and the crowd behind, started shouting: Save now! *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*
 10 Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David that the Lord is bringing forth! Save now, O God in the highest heaven!
 11 And Jesus entered Jerusalem and made his way up to the Temple [where he assessed the practices there]. Then, it being near dusk, he and the twelve returned to Bethany.
 12 Now the next morning, when he was returning to the city from Bethany, Jesus was hungry.
 13 He saw a nice-looking fig tree in the distance, and made his way over to it, hoping to find some figs. But when he got to it, there was nothing but leaves on it, for harvest time hadn't come yet [--the fig tree only *looked* like it might have fruit].
 14 In response to this, Jesus answered: May no man ever eat fruit off of you again! And his disciples heard him say this.
 15 After this, they re-entered Jerusalem. Jesus then went up to the Temple and began to throw out those in the Court of Gentiles who did business there. He also overturned the tables of the money-changers and the chairs of the sacrificial dove-sellers [who should not have been sitting in that court of the Temple].
 16 He also wouldn't allow people to carry any wares for sale on the Temple grounds.
 17 And he taught, saying: Is it not written: **My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?** But you have made it into a den of thieves!
 18 The Torah teachers and the chief Sadducee priests heard him say this, and they yearned to find some way to kill him--but they were afraid to take action because the multitudes were enraptured by his words and teachings.
 19 When evening was come, Jesus left the city.
 20 Now the next morning, when they were going back to Jerusalem, the disciples saw the fig tree from the day before was dried up from its roots.
 21 Peter, remembering Jesus' words, said: Rabbi, look--the fig tree you cursed has dried up, and died!
 22 Jesus' reply to this was: Have faith in God!
 23 For truly I tell you that whoever says to this mountain, "Get up, and be cast into the sea"--without doubting in his heart, but believing what he says shall happen--will have whatever he has asked for!
 24 I thus say to you, whatever things you desire when you pray, believe you already have them, and you shall!
 25 And when you stand praying, forgive if you have a grudge against someone so your Father in heaven can forgive your own trespasses!
 26 But if you don't forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your wrongdoing!
 27 They returned to Jerusalem and the Temple, and this time as Jesus walked through it the chief priests, the

29 And Jesus answered, and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.
 30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.
 31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?
 32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.
 33 And they answered, and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Torah teachers, and the elders of the city accosted him.
 28 They said: By what authority do you presume to come in and do all these things, and who gave you that authority?!
 29 Jesus replied to them: I'll ask one question of you, and if you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things!
 30 John's baptism: Was it given him from heaven, or was it his own invention? Answer that.
 31 The authorities talked it over, and concluded: If we say heaven gave it to him, he'll ask: "Then why didn't you believe him?"
 32 But if we say he made it up on his own, who knows what the crowd will do, seeing they count him as a true prophet?
 33 So they answered by saying: We can't tell. Jesus replied: Then I will not tell you by what authority I do these things!

1. The event happened in the Court of the Gentiles, which had been taken over by the money-changers and those selling sacrificial animals. There was not necessarily a sin in doing this, for in those times many could not practically bring sacrificial animals from great distances to the Temple, and foreign coinage could be considered idolatrous from the images thereon. The problem lay in the exorbitant prices charged by the vendors that were tied to Annas, who then used the profits from these sales and exchanges to bribe the Romans into letting his family keep the High Priesthood. The reason that Jesus overturns the seats of the dove-sellers is that technically the only Temple court one could sit down in was the Court of Women.
2. This is an interesting verse that is hard to understand. It almost suggests Jesus was demanding men do no servile work in the Temple, but there is no Scriptural justification for that concept. Some of the Pharisees, interestingly, had a belief that one should not even carry a purse or staff on the grounds of the Temple Mount, and it may be that Jesus was actually confronting those coming to buy the animals, forbidding them to enter if they brought "vessels" containing valuables or goods relating to the trade going on. (The word translated "vessels" can also be translated as "wares.") One last possibility is that Jesus was preventing people from taking holy objects or dedicated things from the main Temple and its holy inner courts to the less holy outer courts.
3. The Sadducees and their cronies who, as noted, controlled the trade going on.
4. There is some important symbolism here. Jesus is definitely cursing something to do with Israel, for the fig tree was a symbol for Israel and the Jews. More than one theologian has speculated that Jesus was cursing Judaism for its failure to produce true fruit, and given that this event centers around what is going on at the Temple, there is little doubt of that. At minimum, He is cursing the religious and political system of Jerusalem that had become corrupt. But since He is saying that whatever He is cursing is never to bear fruit again "forever," there is little doubt that He is referring to the covenant of Law, represented by the Temple, which *looks* good, but which has no good fruit because of man's corruption. as noted in the commentary under Matthew 21.
5. A sobering warning we should all heed: Forgiveness is not optional.

MARK CHAPTER 12

1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.
 2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.
 3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.
 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.
 5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.
 6 Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.
 7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.¹
 8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.
 9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will

MARK CHAPTER 12

1 Jesus began to preach in parables once again, saying: A man once planted a vineyard, made a fence around it, dug a winepress, erected a guard tower, and then handed it over to some sharecroppers to run while he left for a faraway country.
 2 When harvest time arrived, he sent a servant to the sharecroppers to collect his share of the vineyard's fruits.
 3 But the sharecroppers grabbed hold of him, beat him, and ran him out of the vineyard empty-handed.
 4 The man sent another servant who had rocks thrown at him, and had to leave with a bad head wound after being treated shamefully.
 5 He sent a third, and this one they killed. They beat or killed many other servants sent to them as well.
 6 At the end, he sent his one well-beloved son to them, saying to himself: "Surely, they'll respect my own son!"
 7 But the sharecroppers said to each other: "Here is the man's heir--let's kill him, and then the vineyard will be ours forever!"
 8 So they took the son, killed him, and then threw his body out of the vineyard.
 9 What would you expect the lord of the vineyard to do to these evil men? He will come and destroy them, and hand over the vineyard they wanted to keep for themselves to others [who are worthy].

give the vineyard unto others.

10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees² and of the Herodians³, to catch him in his words.

14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?

15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first

10 Now: Have you ever read the Scripture that says, **The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:**

11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

12 [The group knew this parable was directed straight at them, and they wanted to arrest Jesus on the spot.] But they feared the people so they went away to bide their time.

13 They later sent a select group of [Shammaiite] Pharisees with some of the Herodian priests, hoping to outsmart Jesus and catch him in his own words.

14 When the group arrived, they said to Jesus: Teacher--we know you're sincere, and that you could care less about the opinion of man, but stand up for the truth of God regardless of the consequences. Now we have a question: Does the Law of Moses permit paying taxes to Caesar [and thus supporting the empire that oppresses the nation], or not?

15 Should we pay, or should we not pay? Jesus, however, knew their hypocrisy, and said: Why do you try to trick me? Show me a coin of the tribute!

16 They sent someone for a denarius, and Jesus asked them: Whose image and inscription is on this coin? They replied: Caesar's.

17 Jesus responded by saying: Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but give to God what is God's! And they were astonished by the wisdom of his answer.

18 Then some Sadducee priests--who deny there is a resurrection of the dead--took a crack at him, saying:

19 Teacher--Moses wrote that if a man dies childless, his brother must marry his wife, and produce an heir for him.

20 Now there were seven brothers, and the first married a woman, and died childless.

21 The second then married her, and also died. The third married her, and died too.

22 Eventually, all seven married the woman and died childless, and finally she also died.

23 Now--in the resurrection, whose wife would she be, since all seven married her?

24 Jesus replied by saying: Don't you fall into error from the start since you don't even know or understand the Scriptures, or the power of God on top of that?!

25 When people rise from the dead in the resurrection, they will neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but will be like the angels in heaven.

26 Now as regards your error over whether men [have immortal souls, and whether or not they] will rise in resurrection: Haven't you read in the Torah how God spoke to Moses in the bush, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"?

27 [Not "I was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."] So God is the God of those who still live and worship him even in the grave, rather than a God of those who have gone to the grave and forever lost all consciousness. Thus, you greatly err in your theology.

28 One of the [Hillelite] Torah teachers came up, and overhearing the discussion, knew Jesus had answered them brilliantly, so he asked him: What do you believe is the most important command in the Law?

29 Jesus answered: The first, and most critical, of all the commandments is: **Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:**

commandment.

31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

35 And Jesus answered, and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?

36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

30 **And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.** This is the first commandment given.

31 The second is like it: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** There are no other commandments more important than these.

32 [Hillel had a similar teaching, and] the Torah teacher responded: Master, you have spoken well, for there is only one God, and no others.

33 And to love Him with all one's being and understanding, along with loving one's neighbor as himself, is more important than any burnt offerings or sin sacrifices!

34 When Jesus saw the man displayed wisdom in his statement, he told him: You are close to the Kingdom of God. After this, none of Jesus' enemies dared try to outsmart him.

35 But while Jesus was teaching in the Temple courts, he asked: Why do the Torah teachers say the Messiah is the son of *David* [and thus in an inferior position to him]?

36 For the Holy Spirit inspired David to write in the Psalms: **The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.**

37 David thus calls the Messiah his own Lord, so how can he be nothing more than *his* descendant and heir? [The common people delighted at hearing new teachings and revelations like this].

38 And he warned them in his doctrine: Beware of Torah teachers who love to walk around in richly embroidered prayer shawls with their long commandment threads, and to be greeted in the marketplaces with deference to their positions,

39 And love the best seats in the synagogues, and the best seats at feasts,

40 Yet turn widows out into the streets where they make long, hypocritical public prayers. In hell, these men will have a greater punishment than the worst sinners!

41 Jesus then took a place near the collection boxes in the court, and watched people casting their money in. Many rich people deposited great amounts.

42 In time, a poor widow came up and deposited two copper coins.

43 Jesus called the disciples, and said: Truly I say to you, this poor widow gave more than any of the others,

44 For they gave from their surplus [after their own needs were met], while she gave all that she owned!

1. A verse showing that the elders who ultimately rejected Christ did so knowing He was the promised Messiah, rather than in ignorance. It is to the Sadducees that this parable seems most directly tied to since the High Priest makes the final choice to reject Christ. The Sadducees, remember, deny the idea of a Messiah to start with, and deny there is an afterlife--so, in their mind, they may as well kill Jesus even if He *is* the Messiah if it means keeping their positions of power.

2. Probably hostile Shammaites.

3. Sages and priests allied with Herod because of their mutual collaboration with the Romans.

MARK CHAPTER 13

1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!¹

2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.²

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew

MARK CHAPTER 13

1 As Jesus exited the Temple grounds, one of his disciples excitedly said: Master--look what magnificent huge stones and architecture are here!

2 Jesus replied: You see these great buildings? I tell you there will not be so much as two bricks left cemented together that will not be thrown down!

3 Later, as Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives in the shadow of the great Temple, Peter and Andrew, and

asked him privately,

4 Tell us, when shall these things be?³ and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

6 For many shall come in my name⁴, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet⁵, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:

16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.⁶

19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in

James and John, came privately to him and asked:

4 Tell us when these things will happen to the Temple. And what will be the signs that it is approaching fulfillment?

5 Jesus began to say in response: Beware, lest someone deceive you.

6 For between now and then, many will come, usurping my position, and saying, "I am the Messiah." Many will be deceived by them.

7 And when you hear of impending war or rumors of war, don't be worried. Such things must happen, but the end of the Age will not come yet.

8 Nation will indeed rise against nation, and race will battle race, and there will be great earthquakes and famines. These will be the start of the *Birthpangs of the Messiah*.

9 But watch out for yourselves, for you will be tried before religious courts, and they will beat you in the synagogues. You will also be taken before rulers and kings because of your stand for me; and then you will testify of me to them.

10 [But before the end,] the Gospel must be preached to all people.

11 And when the time comes that they haul you before these tribunals, don't plan what you're going to say beforehand. The Holy Spirit will give you the words to respond with in the hour you need them, and it will be He, not you, who speaks.

12 In the times to come, brother will betray brother to death, as will the father betray his son, and the children their parents, causing them to be put to death.

13 You will be hated by all men for your commitment to me, but those who endure the persecution to the end will be saved!

14 But note: When you see the *Abomination of Desolation* prophesied of by Daniel the prophet standing [in the Holy of Holies], let those in Judaea flee to the mountains.

15 Let him on the housetop run for the hills without even stopping long enough to grab anything from his house.

16 Let him in the field not even go back to grab his cloak before fleeing.

17 And woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days!

18 And keep praying that the time of your flight does not come in the cold of winter.

19 For in those days shall be tribulation such as has never been seen before, nor will be seen again.

20 And unless God cuts those days short, everyone will die. But God will intervene on behalf of His elect people, and the days of tribulation will be cut short.

21 In those days if any man says, "Look--the Messiah is in this place or that," don't believe him!

22 For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and produce [false] miracles to deceive many, including God's elect if that were possible.

23 But stay on guard, because I have warned you about this.

24 In those days, at the climax of the tribulation, the sun will grow dark and the moon will give no light.

25 And the stars in the sky will fall [as the demonic powers in the heavens are cast down to perdition].

26 Then all will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds

the clouds with great power and glory.

27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:

29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.⁷

31 Heaven⁸ and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son⁹, but the Father.

33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

34 For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

with great power and glory.

27 And he shall send forth his angels to gather his elect people from every part of creation, from the four corners of the earth, to the four corners of heaven.

28 Learn a parable from the fig tree: When its branches are supple and sprout leaves, you know summer is near.

29 In like manner, when you see these things come to pass, know that the culmination of this Age, and the start of the Messianic Age, is at hand.

30 I assure you that the generation alive to see each of these things will not vanish before it sees the culmination of those things come to pass.

31 The cosmos and the earth will pass away, but what I say never will!

32 But *the Day and the Hour* [--the *Rosh Hashanah*--] that all these things will happen, no one, including the angels, knows; but the Father alone. Even I do not know it.

33 So stay in prayer, remaining faithful and on watch--because you don't know when that time will be.

34 For the Son of Man is like a man who went on a long journey, leaving his holdings in care of his servants, and commanding the gatekeeper to keep watch.

35 So [you gatekeepers] keep yourselves ready, for you don't know when your Master will return to call you to account for what you've done with what he's left in your possession. He may come at dusk, at midnight, at dawn, or in the morning!

36 You don't want him to arrive without warning and find you asleep at your post!

37 So what I say to one, I say to all--watch [and be faithful]!

1. One of the wonders of the ancient world, the whole of the magnificent Temple complex in Jerusalem took over 46 years to build. Because it was a project of Herod the Great, the Pharisees hated it.

2. This is hyperbole, but still true. The Wailing Wall, for instance, was only a retaining wall and not a part of the actual Temple.

3. Jesus here begins to jump back and forth between the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and the eventual tribulation period (an *apotelesmatic application* of prophecy in technical terms). Matthew 24:3 gives a more complete record of the question asked by the disciples, who wish to know not only when the Temple will be destroyed, but when Christ's coming will be (since they incorrectly equate the two events), and verse 10 here obviously refers to a time far removed from the apostolic era when all the world will have had an opportunity to hear the Gospel.

4. Not necessarily representing themselves as servants of Jesus Christ, but coming and claiming to *be* the Messiah.

5. Daniel 9:27: **And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.** The precise nature of the "abomination" is not understood, but almost universally is believed to be some sort of idol. Some have suggested it could be everything from a talking crucifix, statue of the Virgin Mary, to a statue of the Antichrist based on Rev. 13:15. Caligula, it should be noted, had planned to erect a statue of himself in the Holy of Holies, but was assassinated before he could follow through.

6. Note that Mark omits mention of the Sabbath, unlike Matthew. This is because it was not applicable to his Gentile audience!

7. Grammatically referring to those listening to Jesus at that time, but referring also to those who are alive when "the fig tree" (Israel) puts forth branches' -- i.e., when the Jews return to the land from the Diaspora.

8. Passages about "Heaven" passing away do not refer to the dimension God lives in, but to what we would call *space*.

9. Jesus is speaking from the limitations of His humanity. Since He is indeed God, in eternity where He now dwells, He likewise exists simultaneously in the past, present and future even as the Father does, and so indeed knows "the Day and the Hour" at this time. Note the term "the Day and the Hour" is itself a term connected with *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish Festival of Trumpets, the symbolism of which indicates that it will be the "Day" upon which Christ returns in some year. Since it is a two-day Festival, one could never know the precise day even if he knew which *Rosh Hashanah* of which year would herald the return of Christ. Since *Rosh Hashanah* came to be viewed as the Jewish New Year, Jesus may also be using the term to say that no one can know the year this will happen in. This otherwise is the most problematic verse in the New Testament for Trinitarians since the heavenly hierarchy is (apparently) listed here, with no mention of the Holy Spirit. To some, this proves the Holy Spirit is not an independent person within the Godhead, but what it was understood to be at the time: the active power and inspiration of God working in the earth. The next step in this concept is usually to deny the Deity of Christ once the Holy Spirit is reduced only to a force. But there is actually no great mystery why Jesus does not mention the Spirit. The Spirit at this time is not clearly understood to be a personality within the triune Godhead, but in later Scriptures that fact is brought out clearly. Jesus did not mention the Spirit in this passage simply because it was not yet the right time to reveal that hidden truth. Thus, by not mentioning the Spirit He avoids questions that otherwise would require Him to reveal a fact about the nature of God that the disciples (and the Jews) are not yet ready to hear (John 16:12).

MARK CHAPTER 14

1 After two days was the Feast of the passover¹, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.
2 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.
3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper², as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.
4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?
5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.
6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.
7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.
8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.
9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.
10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.
11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.
12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover³, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?
13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water⁴: follow him.
14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?
15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.
16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.
18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.
19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?
20 And he answered, and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.
21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

MARK CHAPTER 14

1 After two days was the Feast of Passover, and then Unleavened Bread. As this day approached, the chief Sadducee priests and the Torah teachers sought to find a way to trick Jesus into being taken into custody so they could kill him.
2 But they said: Not on the Passover itself, lest the crowds rise up.
3 Now as Jesus was in Bethany eating dinner at the house of Simon the Leper [father of Judas], a woman with an alabaster vial filled with precious perfumed ointment came in and broke the vial, pouring its contents upon Jesus' head.
4 Some present were offended at the act, and asked: Why was this vial of ointment wasted like this?
5 It could have been sold for nearly a year's wages that could have been given to the poor! And they grumbled against her.
6 But Jesus said: Leave her be! Why do you bother her? She has performed a righteous act on me.
7 The poor will always be there for you to help, but you will not always have me.
8 She has done what she could in the time remaining, for she has anointed my body for burial.
9 I want you to know that wherever in the world this Gospel is preached, the tale of what she did will be preached too as a memorial of her and what she did.
10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief Sadducee priests, offering to betray Jesus to them.
11 When he made the offer they were delighted, and offered him money in return. So from that point, he began looking for the best way to deliver Jesus into their hands.
12 On the eve of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lambs were slain, the disciples asked Jesus: Where do you want us to make preparations so you can eat the Passover meal?
13 And he sent out two disciples, telling them: Go into Jerusalem, [and you'll spot something unusual: A man [—rather than a woman—] carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him to the house he goes to.
14 Then seek out the owner of the house, and say to him: "The Master says, 'Where is the guest chamber where I can eat the Passover with my disciples?'"
15 He will show you a large room on an upper floor furnished and ready. Prepare our Passover there.
16 So the disciples went into Jerusalem and found things as Jesus had told them. Then they prepared for the Passover Festival.
17 Jesus arrived that evening with the twelve disciples.
18 As they reclined and ate, Jesus said: I assure you that one of you eating with me tonight will betray me.
19 The disciples were all filled with sorrow, and began asking in turn: Is it I? Is it me? Even [Judas] asked: Is it I?
20 Jesus' reply was: It is one of you twelve who dip in the dish with me.
21 And sure enough, the Son of Man will go on to what is prophesied about him in the Scriptures, but woe to the one who is sending him down that road! It would be good for that man if he had never been born!
22 As they ate the meal, Jesus took unleavened bread, blessed God, and handed it out, saying: Take and eat this. This is my body.
23 Then he took the cup of wine, and after giving thanks

22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.
 23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.
 24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.
 25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.
 26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.
 27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.
 28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.⁵
 29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.
 30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock⁶ crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.
 31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.
 32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.
 33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;
 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.
 35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.
 36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.
 37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?
 38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.
 39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.
 40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.
 41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
 42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.
 43 And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.
 44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.

to God, he passed it around and they all drank from it.
 24 He said: This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.
 25 I assure you that I will never drink any fruit of the vine again until the day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God!
 26 After they had sung one of the Hymns of Ascent, they made their way to the Mount of Olives.
 27 As they went, Jesus said to them: All of you will [stumble in your faith and abandon me tonight], for it is written: **I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.**
 28 But after I rise, I will go and wait for you in Galilee.
 29 Peter, however, assured him: Even if everyone else here stumbles [and abandons you]--I won't!
 30 Jesus' reply was: I assure you that this day, even this very night, before the "rooster" crows twice--you will deny even knowing me, not just once, but three times!
 31 But Peter denied it all the more vehemently, declaring: If I have to die with you, I will not deny you in any way! The other disciples said likewise.
 32 Eventually they came to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to the disciples: Sit here, while I go pray.
 33 And he took Peter, James, and John with him a few yards away. But as he went, a feeling of utter dread and sorrow came upon him.
 34 Jesus told them: My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, almost to the point of death. Wait here, and keep watch.
 35 Jesus went forward a few steps, and fell prostrate upon the ground, praying that what lay ahead could be avoided if possible.
 36 He prayed: Abba Father, all things are possible for You...take this cup away from me--yet not my will, but Yours be done.
 37 After a while, he returned to find everyone asleep. So he awakened Peter, and said: Shimon--are you asleep?! Could you not stay on watch for just one hour?!
 38 Stay alert and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak [and may be your downfall].
 39 And he went back, praying the same words as before.
 40 When he returned, the disciples were once more asleep, unable to keep their eyes open, and they had no good answer as to why they could not stay awake.
 41 When this happened a third time, Jesus said: Fine, sleep on, and rest. Enough is enough--the hour is come. Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
 42 Get up! Let's go--my betrayer has come!
 43 Now while he was speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived at the head of a crowd armed with swords and clubs that had been sent by the Sadducees, the Torah teachers, and the city elders.
 44 Earlier, the betrayer had told them to look for the sign he would give them: The one I give the customary kiss of greeting to is Jesus. Take him into custody, and you'll be able to lead him away in safety!
 45 As soon as he arrived, Judas went over to Jesus, calling out: Rabbi! Rabbi! Then he gave him a kiss of greeting.
 46 The others then rushed up and took Jesus into custody.
 47 Now one of the disciples [--trying to help Jesus--] drew a sword and cut the ear off a man in the crowd who happened to be a servant of the High Priest.
 48 [Before things could escalate,] Jesus said: Why do you come out, armed to the teeth, like you're apprehending

45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.
 46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him.
 47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.
 48 And Jesus answered, and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?
 49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.
 50 And they all forsook him, and fled.
 51 And there followed him a certain young man⁸, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:
 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.
 53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.
 54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.
 55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.
 56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.
 57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,
 58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.
 59 But neither so did their witness agree together.
 60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?
 61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing.
 Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?
 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.
 63 Then the high priest rent his clothes⁹, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?
 64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all¹⁰ condemned him to be guilty of death.
 65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.
 66 And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:
 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.
 68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.
 69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.
 70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one

some bandit?
 49 You saw me in the Temple each day preaching, and you didn't touch me then--but the Scriptures must be fulfilled, mustn't they?
 50 At this, the disciples all scattered and ran for their lives.
 51 Now a young man [--John Mark, who was present in the house during their Passover--] had slipped out to follow and see what would happen, but he was clad only in a fine linen sheet. Some of the young men in the crowd spotted him and tried to catch him,
 52 But he managed to slip from their grasp, leaving the sheet in their hands as he ran away naked.
 53 The others, meanwhile, led Jesus to the palace of the High Priest where all chief priests, the key city elders, and the Torah teachers were gathered.
 54 Peter was following along in the distance, and he managed to slip into the palace of the High Priest. He then mingled with some of the servants in the courtyard, warming himself at a bright bonfire.
 55 Meanwhile, the chief Sadducee priests and their [city] Sanhedrin sought for two witnesses who could say something giving them leave to kill Jesus, but found none.
 56 All sorts of people spoke lies against him, but they couldn't find two who could get their stories straight.
 57 Finally, a couple of men testified falsely against Jesus, saying:
 58 We heard him say: "I will destroy this Temple made by human hands, and within three days will erect another built without human hands!"
 59 But even these didn't say exactly the same thing.
 60 Finally, the High Priest stood up in the midst of the gathering and asked Jesus: Do you have nothing to say? What are all these things you're being accused of by the people?
 61 But Jesus kept silent, and finally the High Priest demanded: Are you the Messiah, Son of the Blessed?!
 62 And Jesus said: I AM! And you all will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven!
 63 Then the High Priest [broke the Law of Moses, and] rent his clothing. He said: What need is there of more witnesses?
 64 You all heard him [blasphemously apply the name of God to himself], so what is your judgment? So they held a quick vote, and all of them voted Jesus guilty, and deserving of death.
 65 Some now began to spit on Jesus, and blindfolded him so he couldn't see while they slapped him. They shouted out: Prophecy [who it was that struck you]! The servants also slapped him in the face with their palms.
 66 Now as Peter was in the courtyard below the palace, one of the female servants of the High Priest came along.
 67 She noticed Peter warming himself at the fire, and fixed her gaze at him, saying: You were with Jesus of Nazareth too!
 68 But he immediately denied it, saying: I have no idea what you could possibly be talking about! Then he began to walk toward the gate leading outside to the street as the "rooster" crowed.
 69 Another female servant then saw him and cried out to those there: This is one of them!
 70 Again, Peter denied it [--this time, with an oath]. But after a while, others standing there said: You *must* be one

of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.
71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.
72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

of them--you even have a Galilean accent!
71 Then Peter began cursing and swearing, stating: I don't know that man you're talking about!
72 Now the "rooster" cried out again, and Peter recalled Jesus telling him: "Before the 'rooster' crows twice--you will deny even knowing me, not just once, but three times!" When he remembered that, he went out and wept bitterly.

1. Wednesday, Nisan 14-15 of 30 AD.
2. Probably the father of Judas, who in John's Gospel (6:71) is called '**Simon's son**.' In Matthew 26:6 we note additionally that as soon as Jesus criticizes Simon while defending the woman's act, Judas goes out to betray Him.
3. Technically incorrect, for the lamb is not slaughtered on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but on the day before. As noted, however, the term had become synonymous for the Passover, and this may explain Mark's apparent "mistake," assuming the cause is not that the group was following a different calendar.
4. An amazing sight to start with, for carrying water was strictly woman's work (except in the case of the Essenes). This servant probably worked for Mark's family, and the house where he entered must have been Mark's house, for many theologians believe Mark accompanies the group to Gethsemane in verse 41. That being said, the Greek here can theoretically be referring to a person of either sex, not only a man.
5. The apostles will refuse to believe this, and instead remain hiding in Jerusalem until Christ comes to show them He has risen.
6. Not referring to a rooster, but to the Temple officer in charge of calling for the priests to take their stations. Chickens, remember, were not allowed in Jerusalem.
7. The precise meaning of the "**cup**" is not fully known. Jesus is probably not begging to avoid crucifixion (since many saints after Him went to their deaths singing and rejoicing), but almost certainly desires to avoid '**becoming sin**' on the cross and enduring the wrath of God against sin in the process of our atonement.
8. The boy is believed by many to be Mark, though apocryphal sources assert it may have been a boy Jesus had resurrected earlier in His ministry. See also the note about Mark under Luke 22:42.
9. By doing this, Caiaphas has disqualified himself as High Priest, for he is forbidden by the Torah (Lev. 10:6) to rend his garments despite this being appropriate for one who thinks he hears blasphemy against God.
10. As noted elsewhere, this is not the Sanhedrin proper, controlled by the Pharisees, but the city Sanhedrin controlled by the Sadducees. The "**all**" who condemn Christ consist of the Sadducees, Herodians, and perhaps some hostile Pharisees. It cannot possibly have included the Hillelite Gamaliel who headed the Sanhedrin proper because he is praised in Acts.

MARK CHAPTER 15

1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes¹ and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.
2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto them, Thou sayest it.
3 And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.
4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.
5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.
6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.
7 And there was one named Barabbas², which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.
8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.
9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?
10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.
11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.
12 And Pilate answered, and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?
13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.
14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he

MARK CHAPTER 15

1 As soon as dawn broke, the chief Sadducee priests consulted with the religious leaders, the Torah teachers, and the entire [city] Sanhedrin. Then they bound Jesus and sent him to the Roman governor Pilate.
2 When he met him, Pilate asked: Are you, "The King of the Jews"? Jesus' response was: You are saying that I am [by what you are doing].
3 The chief Sadducee priests then made numerous accusations against Jesus, but he remained silent.
4 Pilate again spoke to Jesus, saying: Have you nothing to say at all? Look how many charges they're bringing against you!
5 But still Jesus kept silent, and Pilate was amazed at this.
6 Now at the Feasts [as a gesture of goodwill,] the governor would release a condemned criminal of their choice to the people.
7 In custody was a violent, murderous revolutionary named bar Abbas, who with his gang had been apprehended and now awaited execution.
8 The crowd now began calling for Pilate to follow the custom, and release one man [--namely, this same bar Abbas].
9 But Pilate answered: Do you want me to release "The King of the Jews" to you?
10 For Pilate knew full well that the chief Sadducee priests had delivered Jesus solely out of envy.
11 But those chief priests moved the crowd to holler for bar Abbas instead.
12 So Pilate answered again: Then what do you want me to do with the one you call "The King of the Jews"?
13 The crowd screamed out again: Crucify him!

done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus³, to bear his cross.

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.⁴

23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.⁵

24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

25 And it was the third hour⁶, and they crucified him.

26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

29 And they that passed by railled on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.⁷

33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.⁸

36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

40 There were also women looking on afar off: among

14 Pilate responded: Why? For what evil that he has done? But they shouted out all the louder: Crucify him!

15 And so Pilate--desiring to placate the people--gave in to the crowd, and released bar Abbas to them. Then, after flogging Jesus, he ordered him to be crucified.

16 The legionnaires now led Jesus into the Praetorium hall and called their fellow soldiers out to see the spectacle.

17 They threw a purple cloak upon his back, wove together a crown of thorns, then placed it upon his head,

18 And began mockingly shouting: Hail, King of the Jews!

19 And they beat him with a reed stick, and spat upon him, and mockingly got on their knees in obeisance to him.

20 When they tired of this mocking, they took back the cloak and dressed him back in his own robe. Then they led him out to be crucified.

21 As they were going, a man named Simon of Cyrene was coming from the country into Jerusalem for the Festival. This Simon, who was father to Alexander and Rufus, was forced by the Romans to help Jesus bear his cross.

22 And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means *Place of the Skull [of Adam]*.

23 There, they offered him some wine drugged with myrrh to drink, but he refused it.

24 When they crucified Jesus, they divided his clothing and dived to see who would get to choose what.

25 It was 9 AM when all this happened.

26 And above Jesus' head on the cross was an inscription that read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27 Crucified on both sides of Jesus were also two thieves.

28 This fulfilled a prophecy that said: **And he was numbered with the transgressors.**

29 Those who passed by mocked Jesus, saying: So, you who were going to destroy the Temple, and rebuild it in three days--

30 Save yourself, and come down off that cross!

31 Likewise, the key Sadducee priests and Torah teachers mockingly said among themselves: He saved others, but he can't save himself!

32 Let us see the "Messiah and King of Israel" come down now from that cross, and we'll believe! The two thieves being crucified also mocked him like this.

33 Now when noon came, a great darkness fell over all the land until 3 PM [when the High Priest sacrificed the Passover lamb].

34 At 3 PM, Jesus cried out on a loud voice in the Aramaic language, quoting a Psalm, and saying: **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**

35 [Because the words "My God" and the name of Elijah in Aramaic are both pronounced "Eli,,"] some said: Look--he's calling for Elijah!

36 Someone ran off and soaked a sponge with non-kosher vinegar wine, placed the sponge on a stick, and then lifted it up to Jesus to drink. Others said: Leave him alone, and let's see if Elijah comes to take him down from that cross!

37 Jesus then cried out with a loud voice, and expired.

38 At the same instant, the curtain sealing off the Holy of Holies was ripped apart from top to bottom!

39 When a centurion present saw how Jesus cried out

whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;
 41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.
 42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath⁹,
 43 Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor¹⁰, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly¹¹ unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.
 44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion,¹² he asked him whether he had been any while dead.
 45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.
 46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.
 47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

and yielded his spirit up to death, he noted: This man truly *was* the Son of God!
 40 Now some female followers of Jesus were watching the scene from a distance. They included Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of James the younger, Joses, and Salome.
 41 These women followers had ministered to Jesus in Galilee, and many other women had come with them to Jerusalem.
 42 Now as evening drew near, since it was the preparation for the Sabbath,
 43 Joseph of Arimathaea, a just man on the Great Sanhedrin who also was looking for the Kingdom of God to come, boldly went before Pilate and asked to be given Jesus' body.
 44 Pilate was amazed that Jesus was already dead, so he summoned the centurion in charge of the crucifixion to verify the fact that Jesus had been dead for a while.
 45 When the officer confirmed it, he allowed Joseph to take the body.
 46 So Joseph took a fine linen shroud, took him down, wrapped Jesus in it, and placed him in a tomb hewn out of a rocky outcrop. He then had a large stone rolled in front of the opening to seal it.
 47 And Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joses observed where he was laid to rest in a tomb.

1. Note that no specific mention is made of the Pharisees.
2. Barabbas' name means "Son of the Father."
3. Simon apparently converted to Christianity along with his family since it is presumed the reader is acquainted with his sons, Alexander and Rufus.
4. The site of the Crucifixion has never been known with precise certainty. However, a good case can be made that it was on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, close to one of the city gates near the outdoor altar where the *Yom Kippur* sacrifice was made and the red heifer slain. Local legend held that Adam's skull was buried in this area. Jeremiah's Grotto is also a candidate for the site of the Crucifixion because of a skull-like outcropping of rock there. However, the amount of natural decay over the last couple of centuries suggests that this formation probably was not recognizable as a skull 2000 years ago.
5. It was a custom to offer this narcotized wine to those being crucified to help deaden the pain.
6. The "third hour" is 9 AM.
7. Apparently, one of those crucified with Christ repented (Luke 23:39).
8. They think this because "eloi" or "Eli" in Aramaic is also the name for Elijah.
9. Nisan (April) 14.
10. Meaning that he was a member of the Sanhedrin proper.
11. Possibly meaning that he courageously went to Pilate, knowing that this would bring condemnation upon him from the elders; or else that he ignores Shammai's prohibition against entering the house of a Gentile, thereby bringing personal defilement upon himself in the act.
12. That Mark was writing to a Roman audience is implied by his use of a Latin spelling for "centurion," rather than the usual Greek spelling employed in other Gospels. Another possibility is that he was indicating a Roman officer was in charge over the Syrian troops overseeing the Crucifixion.

MARK CHAPTER 16

1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.
 2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.
 3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?
 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.
 5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.
 6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

MARK CHAPTER 16

1 After the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of James and Salome, brought spices to cover the body of Jesus.
 2 At sunrise on Sunday morning, they came to the tomb.
 3 They were wondering among themselves: Who will roll the stone away for us from the entrance of the tomb?
 4 But when they came to the tomb and looked, they found the very large stone was already rolled aside.
 5 The women entered into the tomb and there saw what looked like a young man clothed in a long white garment sitting on the right side of where the body had lain--and they were terrified!
 6 But he said: Stop cringing in fear. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, and is not

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.
 8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.
 9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.¹
 10 And she went, and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.
 11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.
 12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.
 13 And they went, and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.
 14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.
 15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world², and preach the gospel to every creature.
 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.
 19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.
 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

here! See--this was where they laid him.

7 But go your way, and tell his disciples, including Peter, that he has gone to Galilee, and is waiting for them there--and there they will see him as he said earlier.

8 Yet the women fled from the tomb in terror and amazement, and said nothing to anyone because of their fear.

9 Now when Jesus had risen early Sunday, he first appeared to Mary of Magdala, who had once been totally possessed by seven demons he had cast out.

10 This same Mary went, and told the disciples, who were mourning Jesus' death with tears.

11 But though she swore she had seen Jesus alive, the disciples did not believe her.

12 After this, Jesus appeared in another form to two of his followers as they were walking in the country.

13 They came and reported this to the disciples, but they wouldn't believe them either.

14 Finally, Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were having dinner, and he gave them a severe tongue lashing for their hardness of heart in refusing to believe those who had seen him alive after his resurrection.

15 Then he said: As you go forth into the world, preach the Gospel to every creature.

16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.

17 And these signs will follow those who have believed: As my representatives and followers, they will cast out devils; they will speak with new tongues;

18 They will handle snakes with impunity; if they drink anything dangerous, it will not--and I mean *not*--harm them; and they will lay hands on the sick, and the sick shall recover.

19 After the Lord had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven and sat down at God's right hand.

20 And the disciples went out and preached everywhere, the Lord's power being with them, and the Message was confirmed by many signs following. Amen.

1. The oldest manuscripts omit verse 9 forward, and there is speculation it may have been added subsequent to the original text's creation, especially since they use some words not otherwise found in Mark's Gospel. Unfortunately, many study Bibles thus go on to treat these verses as apocryphal. However, the 2nd century *Diatesseron* actually noted the key ending of Mark:

Then said Jesus unto them, I have been given all authority in heaven and earth; and as my Father hath sent me, so I also send you. Go now into all the world, and preach my gospel in all the creation; and teach all the peoples, and baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and teach them to keep all whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you all the days, unto the end of the world. For whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not shall be rejected. And the signs which shall attend those that believe in me are these: that they shall cast out devils in my name; and they shall speak with new tongues; and they shall take up serpents, and if they drink deadly poison, it shall not injure them; and they shall lay their hands on the diseased, and they shall be healed. But ye, abide in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be clothed with power from on high.--Roberts-Donaldson translation.

2. "Go ye" is a bad translation. It is better rendered: "As you go."

LUKE

The Gospel of Luke was written somewhere around AD 60 to a resident of Antioch named Theophilus. Tradition holds that Luke was also from there.

LUKE CHAPTER 1

1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,
2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;
3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,¹
4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.
5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.
6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.²
7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.³
8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,
9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.⁴
10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.
11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.
12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.
13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.
14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.
15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.
16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.
17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.
18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.
19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.
20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to

LUKE CHAPTER 1

1 **S**ince many have attempted to write an account of the things that we certainly believe,
2 Through the stories passed down to us by those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the Message,
3 I also thought it a good idea that, since my knowledge of the events comes from exhaustive research of the whole story, beginning to end, I write you this account, most excellent Theophilus,
4 So you too can know the absolute truth of the things you've been taught.
5 In the days of Herod the Great, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, who was one of the priests in the division of Abijah [established by David]. Zacharias' wife Elizabeth was descended from Aaron [the first High Priest].
6 Now these two were highly religious and devoted before God, obeying all of the Torah in a blameless manner.
7 Even so, they had no children, for Elizabeth was barren, and now they were both very old.
8 And it came to pass that during one of the two times a year that Zacharias was called upon to serve at the Temple with the other priests of the division of Abijah,
9 For the first time in his life, when they enacted the ritual to cast lots to determine which priest would have the honor of going into the Temple of the Lord and burning incense before the Holy of Holies, it fell to him.
10 At the appointed time, while he was inside burning incense, the Temple courts outside were filled with a multitude of people praying.
11 As he was doing this, an angel of the Lord appeared, standing to the right of the altar of incense!
12 When Zacharias saw him, he was stunned, and great fear fell upon him.
13 But the angel said: Don't be afraid, Zacharias! Your prayer [for a son] has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear a son whom you are to name John [Yochannon].
14 You will have great joy and gladness at this, and many will rejoice at his birth.
15 This child will be great in the Lord's sight [and will be consecrated to God as a Nazirite from his birth]. He must never drink wine or strong drink; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.
16 [He will bring revival to the children of Israel, and turn many to the Lord their God.]
17 He will go before Him, walking in the spirit and power of Elijah to: **turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**
18 Zacharias replied to the angel: How do I know this is true? I am an old man, and my wife too is getting on in years.

speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.⁵
 21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.⁶
 22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.⁷
 23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.
 24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,
 25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.⁸
 26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,
 27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.⁹
 28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured,¹⁰ the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.
 29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.
 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.
 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.¹¹
 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:
 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.
 34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?
 35 And the angel answered, and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.¹²
 36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.
 37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.
 38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.
 39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah;
 40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.
 41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:
 42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

19 The angel then answered: I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and who was sent to speak to you and give you these glad tidings.
 20 Because you did not believe my words that will be fulfilled in the due course of time, you will be made [deaf and] dumb, unable to speak!
 21 Now while this was going on, the people waited for Zacharias, and couldn't understand why he was taking so long in the Temple [so they repeated their prayer over and over again until he came out].
 22 When he finally *did* emerge, he could not speak [and bless the people]--he could only make hand signs--and they knew he must have had some sort of vision in the Temple. After this, he remained unable to speak.
 23 Now when his period of service was over, he went home to his wife.
 24 Elizabeth then conceived, and hid herself for five months. And she said,
 25 "The Lord has been good and merciful to me to look upon me in my old age, and take away the disgrace of being childless!"
 26 Now in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the same angel Gabriel was sent by God to the village of Nazareth in Galilee,
 27 To a young virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The young woman's name was Miriam [meaning Rebel].
 28 The angel came to her, and said: Greetings, you who have been greatly graced! The Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!
 29 When Miriam saw the angel, she was troubled and perplexed, wondering what sort of greeting this was.
 30 But the angel said to her: Don't be afraid, Miriam--for you have found favor with God!
 31 You are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son whom you will name Jesus [Yeshua].
 32 He will be a great man, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David!
 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never have an end!
 34 Then Miriam asked: How can such a thing happen since I am a virgin?
 35 The angel answered: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you. For this reason, the holy child born of you will be called the *Son of God*.
 36 Your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month of a pregnancy for a woman who was called "barren."
 37 For no command or decree of God is without power!
 38 And Miriam replied: Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it happen as you have said. The angel then departed from her.
 39 Miriam left her home around then, and speedily made her way to the hill country of Judea and the village where Elizabeth lived.
 40 Upon entering Zacharias' home, she called out a greeting to Elizabeth.
 41 When Elizabeth heard the sound of her voice, the baby leapt for joy in her womb, and the Holy Spirit filled her, causing her to prophesy.
 42 She cried out: Blessed are you among women, and

44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.
 45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.
 46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.¹³
 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
 49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
 50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
 51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
 52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.
 54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
 55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
 56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.
 57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.
 58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.
 59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.
 60 And his mother answered, and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.
 61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.
 62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.
 63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.
 64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.
 65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.
 66 And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.
 67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,
 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,
 69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;
 70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:
 71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

blessed is the fruit of your womb!
 43 And why am I so honored that the mother of my Lord has come to me?
 44 For as soon as I heard your voice and greeting, the baby inside me leapt for joy!
 45 Blessed is she who believed what the Lord told her, for what she has believed will come to pass!
 46 And Miriam exclaimed: My soul exalts the Lord!
 47 And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
 48 For He has regarded the humble state of His handmaid--for from this point, all generations will call me blessed!
 49 For the Mighty One has done great things to me, and **Holy is His name!**
 50 **His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.**
 51 His mighty arm has scattered those who are arrogant in their hearts' intentions.
 52 He has thrown down the mighty from their thrones and replaced them with the humble.
 53 He has filled the starving with delicacies and the rich have been turned away hungry.
 54 He has come to the rescue of His servant Israel, remembering the promise He made out of mercy for us,
 55 The promise He made to our ancestors, and Abraham, and his descendants forever!
 56 After this, Miriam remained with Elizabeth for around three more months. Then she went back home.
 57 Now Elizabeth's time had come, and she delivered a son.
 58 All her neighbors and relatives heard of the great mercy God had shown her by this miracle, and they rejoiced with her.
 59 And after eight days, according to custom, they came to circumcise the child and give him a name. They started to call him Zacharias, after his father.
 60 But Elizabeth said: No--name him John!
 61 They answered back: But there are none of your relatives [or ancestors] with that name.
 62 So they made signs to [the deaf] Zacharias, trying to get him to communicate what the child should be named.
 63 Zacharias then gestured for a writing tablet, and when given one wrote: *His name is John*. And everyone was amazed.
 64 Then his affliction immediately left him, and Zacharias opened his mouth to praise God.
 65 And a great fear came about everyone in the area, and word of these events circulated about all the Judean hill country.
 66 Everyone who heard about all this wondered what sort of child the infant would grow up to be. And sure enough, the Lord's hand was with him.
 67 The Holy Spirit also filled his father Zacharias, and he prophesied, saying:
 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has come to the aid of his people, and redeemed them.
 69 He has raised up a [mighty sovereign] of deliverance and salvation for us in the house of his servant David,
 70 As He said He would do through the mouths of the holy prophets, who have foretold this since the world began!
 71 He will save us from our enemies and from the hands of all who hate us,

73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,
 74 That he would grant unto us, that we being
 delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve
 him without fear,
 75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the
 days of our life.
 76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the
 Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord
 to prepare his ways;
 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by
 the remission of their sins,¹⁴
 78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the
 dayspring from on high hath visited us,
 79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the
 shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of
 peace.
 80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and
 was in the deserts¹⁵ till the day of his shewing unto
 Israel.

72 So He can enact the mercy promised to our ancestors,
 and remember His holy covenant,
 73 The oath He made to our father Abraham:
 74 That He would deliver us out of the hands of our
 enemies so we could serve Him freely, without fear,
 75 In all holiness and righteousness before Him, all the
 days of our lives.
 76 And you, child, shall be called a prophet of the
 Highest, for you will go before the face of the Lord to set
 the stage;
 77 To teach the way of salvation to God's people
 through the remission of sins,
 78 Accomplished through the tender mercy of our God,
 by whom the rising sun itself has descended to earth and
 come to us,
 79 To give light to those trapped in darkness and the
 shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace!
 80 And so the child grew, and became very powerful in
 spirit; and was in the deserts until the day he was
 revealed to Israel.

1. "**Theophilus**" means *Friend of God* or *Lover of God*. Just who this person was is unknown, though he is believed to have lived in Antioch. There was a Sadducee High Priest, a son of Annas, named Theophilus who was High Priest from 37-41 AD, but almost certainly he is not to whom this Gospel was penned. Luke may be using "**Theophilus**" as a general term for anyone who wishes to learn of God and Christ.

2. An important verse often misunderstood both by cultists and my fellow evangelicals who (correctly) teach that the only true righteousness imparting eternal life is that which comes from faith. However, there is a lesser level of righteousness that is dealt with here: a righteousness of character, or a temporal righteousness. This sort of righteousness is appropriated by living a good moral life in obedience to God's commandments. However, the righteousness that one may appropriate through lifestyle is insufficient to save the soul from death, for only the foreign *spiritual* righteousness imparted through faith in Messiah can allow one to dwell in the presence of God. Even Judaism comes near to understanding this idea when it teaches that an evil man may do a *mitzvah* (good deed) and reap an immediate reward from God for the act, yet the man still dies with his name written in the *Book of the Unrighteous* because he is evil. Where Judaism (and Islam) miss it, is in failing to comprehend that no amount of good deeds and righteous lifestyle will permit God to accept a man on that basis alone, for "**all our righteousness is as filthy rags**" (Isaiah 64:6).

3. Luke's purpose in bringing up how "**righteous**" Zacharias and Elisabeth were is to counter the belief in that time that being childless was a result of sin.

4. During the time of David there were so many priests that he divided them into 24 "courses" (groups). In this time period, each would minister twice a year in the Temple for a week. During the Festivals of Pentecost, *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) and Unleavened Bread they would also be active in their ministrations and then return to their appointed schedules after the end of each Festival. Zacharias' course would have been active in the Temple during May or June, and it is at this time that he encounters Gabriel. John would have been born around April, at or near Passover, an emphasis of which is the coming of Elijah. This would also place Jesus' birth around the Festival of *Sukkot* as shown in the commentary for the next chapter.

After being chosen by lot, the winner selected two friends, the first of whom entered the Holy Place (outside the Holy of Holies) and removed the remains of the offering left upon the altar. The second prepared the coals to receive the next. The winner then entered with a golden censor and spread the incense upon the altar before the curtain sealing off the Holy of Holies.

5. Apparently, God was holding Zacharias to a higher standard of faith, as an experienced priest, than he did a teenage Mary who asks a similar question. Also, the word translated as "**dumb**" is possibly an error that has crept into the text, for the Syrian version of the New Testament uses the word "**deaf**" instead. We see absolute confirmation of this in verse 62, where the people "**made signs**" to Zacharias, who obviously must *be* deaf. Apparently, Zacharias was struck both deaf *and* dumb.

6. As Zacharias performed his function, the people outside would recite a prayer from the Psalms, repeating it if the priest failed to complete his tasks before they finished. By the third recitation they would have definitely begun to wonder what was taking so long.

7. Why Zacharias doesn't write down what happened is puzzling and unexplained.

8. In the culture, as mentioned, to be childless was viewed as a curse from God, and was usually presumed to be the result of sin.

9. Mary's age is unknown, but she was probably 13-15.

10. The strong Greek word here for *highly favored* (*charitoo*), is often appealed to by Catholics as a proof text that Mary was graced in such a way as to have been preserved from Original Sin. However, the same word is used of all believers by Paul in Ephesians 1:6, where it is translated: "**accepted**."

11. *Yeshua* in the actual language, although in Galilee it was pronounced *Yeshu*.

12. For the first time, the term *Son of God* takes on a meaning beyond that of "Messiah" or "King of Israel." Keep in mind that as you see people other than Jesus refer to Him as the "Son of God," in their minds they are equating the term not with a virgin-born man, but as a euphemism for "Messiah."

13. A verse showing that Mary is not sinless, for the sinless need no savior.

14. Josephus on John's Baptism

Now some of the Jews thought that Herod's army had been destroyed by God, and that it was a very just penalty to avenge John, surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had killed him, though he was a good man, who bade the Jews practice virtue, be just one to another and pious toward God, and come together in baptism. He taught that baptism was acceptable to God provided that they underwent it not to procure the remission of certain sins, but for the purification of the body, if the soul had already

been purified by righteousness. Antiquities 18.5.2

This is a verse causes some controversy. The New Testament seems to say that John's baptism was directly concerned with the washing away of sin, yet Josephus apparently contradicts this. In Jewish culture, baptism—a ritual immersion—was practiced on a regular basis. Then, as now, there was a disagreement on whether baptism merely symbolized purification, or whether there was a literal spiritual purification bestowed by the act. It would thus be perfectly orthodox for John to hold that baptism was to be performed as the concluding act of repentance as Josephus indicates; or he could have taught the sin was literally washed away by it. The Essenes themselves appear to have believed that baptism symbolized a spiritual purification performed by the Holy Spirit.

15. This probably indicates that John spent considerable time with the Essenes, who dwelt in the desert, and also that he was a member of their community. John was baptizing at Bethabara, only a few miles from Qumran, and there is no question that he had to have had exposure to Essene teaching and culture, at least some of which must have been incorporated into his ministry. The Hebrew version of Josephus calls John a "High Priest," and this may indicate he actually headed the Essenes at some point. Alternatively, John's popularity and following (confirmed by the Gospels when the religious leaders fear being stoned by the masses if they deny John was a prophet) could suggest he headed an entire organized religious movement specifically created as a counter to the Judaism practiced by the Pharisees and Sadducees.

LUKE CHAPTER 2

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.¹
 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)²
 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.³
 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.
 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.⁴
 8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.⁵
 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy⁶, which shall be to all people.
 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
 15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.
 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
 17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.
 18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.
 19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

LUKE CHAPTER 2

1 And it came to pass in that time that Augustus Caesar issued an edict throughout the Roman Empire to take a census [for purposes of taxation].
 2 [This first affected Judea when Cyrenius was controlling Syria.]
 3 So everyone went to register for the census at the town his ancestors were from.
 4 Joseph also came from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem of Judea, the city of David his ancestor,
 5 To be counted with his betrothed wife, Miriam, who was now in her ninth month of pregnancy. [This took place in early fall, during the Feast of Tabernacles, called the Festival of *Sukkot* by the Jews.]
 6 It happened that while they were in Bethlehem, she was ready to give birth.
 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, laying him inside a manger because there was no room for them in [Joseph's family's tabernacle].
 8 In the same region, one night some shepherds were out in the fields, keeping watch on flocks of lambs [used for Temple sacrifices].
 9 The angel of the Lord appeared to them, shining with God's radiance, and they were terrified.
 10 But the angel said to them: Fear not! For look—I bring you news of great joy that shall bless all people!
 11 For this night is born to you, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord!
 12 Here is how you will know him: You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger!
 13 Suddenly the angel was joined by a host of other angelic beings who were praising God, saying:
 14 Glory to God in the highest! On earth, peace and good will to men!
 15 As the angels left them and ascended into the sky, the shepherds said to each other: Let's go into Bethlehem and see this thing the Lord has made known to us!
 16 So they rushed toward town and found Miriam, Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.
 17 After they had seen this, they spread word to others about what they had been told about the child they saw.
 18 And everyone who heard this wondered about what the shepherds said about the child.
 19 But Miriam remembered all of these events, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24 And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.⁷

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.⁸

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the passover.⁹

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem;

20 Meanwhile, the shepherds returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as a result of what the angel had told them.

21 Now after eight days, when they came to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus because of what the angel had told Miriam before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the period of ritual defilement according to the Law of Moses was over, they brought the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

23 As it is written in the Torah of the Lord: **Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.**

24 They also made the required [sin] sacrifice in the Torah of the Lord [for the mother]: *A pair of two turtledoves or pigeons.*

25 Now in Jerusalem at that time was a man named Simeon. This man was just and religious, waiting for the *Consolation of Israel*, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before seeing the Lord's Messiah.

27 Led by the Spirit one day, Simeon came to the Temple, and when Jesus' parents came to present him and offer up the required sacrifice in the Torah,

28 He took the babe into his arms and blessed God, saying:

29 Lord, now let Your servant die in peace, according to Your word,

30 For my eyes have now seen your salvation,

31 Which you have prepared in the sight of all people;

32 A light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel!

33 Joseph and his mother were amazed at the things that had been spoken about him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Miriam his mother: Behold--this child is fated to be the fall of some, and the rising up of many others in Israel; and for *a sign that will be spoken against*,

35 [So that what is in men's hearts will be revealed for all to see. A sword will pierce your own soul also!]

36 Now also there was a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very, very old, and had been widowed after seven years of marriage.

37 She was now eighty-four years old, and spent day and night in the Temple, serving God [as an intercessor,] fasting and praying.

38 She happened to approach while this was going on, and when she had seen the child she also gave prophetic praise to God for him, and spread word about him to everyone in Jerusalem faithfully awaiting deliverance.

39 When Joseph and Miriam had completed the requirements of the Law of the Lord, they returned to their own town of Nazareth, in Galilee.

40 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was filled with wisdom, and God's grace was with him.

41 Now every year his parents would go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover as was customary [for devout Jews].

42 And when Jesus was twelve, they journeyed to Jerusalem, observing the custom of the Feast.

43 After everything was over, as they returned in a

and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.¹⁰

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.¹¹

caravan to Galilee, the young Jesus slipped away and remained in Jerusalem, but Joseph and his mother didn't realize it.

44 They thought he was with friends or relatives in the caravan, and it was a full day before they started asking their family and friends if they had seen him.

45 When they realized he wasn't there, they rushed back to Jerusalem, trying to find him.

46 On the third day, they found him at the Temple sitting amidst the sages of Israel, listening to them and asking them questions.

47 Everyone there was amazed at the boy's wisdom of understanding, and the questions he answered.

48 When his parents saw him they were amazed, and his mother said: Son--why have you done this?! Your father and I have been going out of our minds with worry! We couldn't find you anywhere!

49 Jesus replied: How is it that you didn't know where to find me? Where else would I be but doing my Father's business [in His house]?

50 But they did not understand what he meant.

51 So Jesus returned home with them, and was obedient to them. Meanwhile, his mother kept all these things in her heart.

52 And in the years that followed, Jesus grew in wisdom and in size [for he was a large man], and increased in favor with both God and man.

1. "Taxed" is a bad translation; "enrolled," or "counted for a census," would be closer to the correct understanding of the text.

2. Skeptics like to point out Cyrenius (or Quirinius) was governor of Syria in 6 AD, long after the most liberal dating for Christ's birth. First, these skeptics either ignore or are ignorant of the fact that the word translated as "governor" (*hegemon*) is a broad term that can refer to a variety of positions including that of a governor. (Luke even uses it about Tiberius.) Quirinius was active in military pursuits in the Middle East for years before he became governor (Tacitus, *Annals* 3.48), and Tertullian states that censuses were conducted in Palestine under Sentius Saturninus, governor from 4 BC to 2 BC. Quirinius would have been subordinate to Saturninus (an acceptable term for which would indeed be *hegemon*), and would have overseen matters of internal security, which may have involved the census given the fact that Herod was loathe to carry it out due to the hostility of the Jews toward it (because they knew taxation followed). Another reasonable scenario is that the census took place in several stages, beginning with Quirinius as subordinate to Saturninus (or Quintilius Varus according to some scholars), culminating in 6 AD--when Quirinius formally became governor--with the accompanying heavy taxation that caused the formation of the Zealots under Judas the Galilean.

Alternatively, archeological evidence from Tivoli dating to 14 AD suggests that someone may twice have been made governor in the region in this timeframe, and while the person's name is obliterated, Quirinius would seem to be a candidate. In any event, there is no good reason to doubt the historicity of the account given the factors that can reasonably account for any alleged contradiction with known historical fact.

3. The skeptics further claim that there is no historical confirmation of such a worldwide census, nor that the Romans would have required citizens to return to their ancestral homes for registration. Against this, first of all, is the fact that for Luke to attempt such a massive distortion of history when masses of people still lived who had been alive during these events is unthinkable. (It would be akin to someone today claiming that President Kennedy had instituted a countrywide census requiring all US citizens to return to their cities of birth to be counted. And even if one takes the view that the story is contrived by Luke, he must explain why Luke would make up such a distortion of what would be known recent history when all he had to do was to invent a simple "lie" and make Joseph a resident of Bethlehem as Matthew seems to since *he* omits mention of a census compelling Joseph to travel to Bethlehem in the first place. There would be neither problem nor controversy with that.) Such an assertion would immediately be denounced as a hoax, and we have no record whatever of any ancient denial of Luke's account. Secondly, it is recorded by Orosius that Augustus instituted a census (in 3 BC), requiring an oath of loyalty be taken. Josephus (*Ant.* 17.41-45) confirms that an oath of obedience to Augustus was required in Judea prior to the death of Herod in 4 BC, and archeological evidence from approximately 3 BC in Turkey likewise shows that a similar oath was taken by the people in their temples, while the ancient Armenian historian Misrop confirms that the census involving Joseph and Mary was held in Armenia and required the people to register in the local temples. Added to this is a parchment from Egypt dating to early in the second century which reads: *Because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residing for any cause away from their home should at once prepare to return to their own governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrollment.* A plaque on Augustus' tomb also noted that three times he conducted a census of the Empire. All this evidence reasonably supports Luke's claim of an empire-wide registration that required people to register in their homes of origin. If there is an error, it is in our translation or understanding of Luke's text, not with the claims made by the text.

4. "Inn" is definitely a mistranslation. The word means a living space or room, and possibly refers to the Hebrew word for *sukkah*, the tabernacles built by the Jews for the Festival of *Sukkot*. Joseph and Mary may have appeared at Bethlehem during the Festival, and had to find a place on their own to stay, for if they had arrived at either the first or last day of the Festival they would have been forbidden to erect their own *sukkah*, and would have had to find preexistent shelter--i.e., the stable with its manger (which tradition, starting with Justin Martyr, claims was a nearby cave, and which may have been considered the equivalent of a *sukkah* in a pinch).

5. Joseph and Mary may not have been in Bethlehem proper, but just outside of it in the area of Migdol Eder, a hill and area with an

old watchtower, where the people often built their tabernacles. It is here in Migdol Eder that lambs were raised for the Passover sacrifices, and during *Sukkot* they are present in the fields, unlike in December when they are usually housed in shelter despite the fact that there is more grass available in winter than summer. Interestingly, Migdol Eder, though treated as a part of Bethlehem (Micah 4:8, the “**Tower of the Flock**,” which arguably prophesies about Christ), was just barely within the rabbinic distance limit from Jerusalem in order to be a valid sacrificial lamb, while Bethlehem proper was just barely outside that distance. All this speculation aside, it would not have been impossible for them to have wound up staying on the lower floor of a relative’s house where animals would also have been stabled.

6. *Sukkot* is also known as *the season of our joy*, and is a Festival for Jew and Gentile alike, for 70 bullocks are sacrificed for the sins of the Gentiles during the Festival.

7. Showing that the Magi had yet to visit, for this is the offering made by the poor, not those who have received “**gold, frankincense, and myrrh**.” It should also be noted that this is a sin-offering for the mother.

8. There is no good explanation why Luke omits the flight into Egypt, a fact skeptics pounce upon. Some possibilities follow:

It is generally accepted that he was not writing to a Jewish audience as was Matthew, and thus he may have had no reason to bring up the event to confirm a very liberal interpretation of prophecy Matthew held to.

He was cutting to the chase and moving the story along, omitting a detail he felt unnecessary to relate. Luke does this at the end of his Gospel when he condenses the 40-day ministry of Christ after the resurrection into only one verse.

Since Mark and John likewise omit the event, apparently the Gospel writers apart from Matthew didn’t feel it noteworthy to mention, perhaps because the flight and return took place in a very short space of time. If this is the case, then the Magi may arrive after baby Jesus’ presentation in the Temple, and then the flight and return occur immediately thereafter. Otherwise, they arrive after about a year has passed, based on the fact that they tell Herod they first saw the star about a year previously. The flight and return then take place, with Jesus being around a year to 18 months old.

9. Showing this was a very religious family, for many Jews outside of Jerusalem by this time did not regularly journey for the three great Festivals.

10. Jesus was almost certainly interacting with Hillel and Shammai, the two most important sages of the era. There is also no question as to how a child could be allowed into such a discussion, for it was a Jewish custom for a sage to bring up a question for debate and then ask the youngest person there to comment.

11. A very important verse showing that Jesus was not born with infinite knowledge and understanding as some believe, but had to learn as a human being under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

LUKE CHAPTER 3

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign¹ of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene²

2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests³, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?⁴

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.⁵

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10 And the people asked him, saying, What

LUKE CHAPTER 3

1 Now in the fifteenth year Tiberius Caesar ruled Rome [27 AD], Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod Antipas was Tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was Tetrarch of Ituraea and the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias was the Tetrarch of Abilene.

2 Caipahas was then the reigning High Priest [though his father-in-law, Annas, was still alive and had occupied that position before him]. It was at this time that John, the son of Zacharias, received a revelation from God out in the deserts.

3 And he went throughout Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,

4 Fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah the prophet: **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.**

5 **Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;**

6 **And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.**

7 And he said to the multitude who sought baptism from him, saying: You generation of snakes! Who warned *you* to repent and escape God’s coming wrath?

8 If you want to repent, prove it by changing the way that you think and act—and don’t feel secure because you’re physically descended from Abraham [and think that guarantees your being accepted by God]. I tell you that God can take these rocks [erected by Joshua] and turn *them* into children of Abraham if He wants to!

9 God’s ax is ready to fell the trees that bear no good fruit, and those trees not bearing good fruit will be cast into the fire!

10 The people, meanwhile, asked John: What shall we do then?

11 He answered: Let the man with two coats give one to someone without any; and let the man with food on his table share with him who is starving!

12 Even some hated tax collectors came to be baptized, and

shall we do then?

11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.⁶

15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:⁷

17 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

18 And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

19 But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20 Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,⁸

24 Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,

25 Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge,

26 Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda,

27 Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri,

28 Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er,

29 Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim,

they asked: Rabbi--what should we do?

13 John's answer was: Take no more than the minimal taxes Rome demands.

14 Some soldiers likewise asked: What should we do? And John answered: Don't use violence to intimidate people; do not make a false accusation against anyone; and don't extort money, but be content with your wages.

15 Now since the people were in heightened expectation that the Messiah might come in their lifetime, they all pondered on their hearts whether John could be he.

16 But John denied it to them all, saying: I am indeed baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming whose sandal straps I am unworthy to untie--and he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire!

17 His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean out the threshing floor, gathering the wheat into his storage bin while burning the chaff with everlasting fire!

18 John taught and exhorted many other things to the people as well.

19 But Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, was a target of John's criticism for taking his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, for himself; and for his many other atrocities.

20 Bad as all these crimes were, even worse was that he cast John into a dungeon!

21 Now when all the people had been baptized, Jesus also came to be baptized, and when he arose from the water and prayed, the heavens parted,

22 And the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon him, and a voice from heaven said: You are my beloved Son! In you, I am well pleased!

23 Jesus was now about thirty years old, being [as was supposed] the son of Joseph [Let Him Add], who became son of Heli [Ascending],

24 Who was son of Matthat [Gift of God], who was son of Levi [Joined], who was son of Melchi [My King], who was son of Janna [Flourishing], who was son of Joseph [Let Him Add],

25 Who was son of Mattathias [Gift of Yahweh], who was son of Amos [Burden], who was son of Naum [Consolation], who was son of Esli [Reserved of Yahweh], who was son of Nagge [Illuminating],

26 Who was son of Maath [Small], who was son of Mattathias [Gift of Yahweh], who was son of Semei [Listen], who was son of Joseph [Let Him Add], who was son of Judah [He Shall Be Praised],

27 Who was son of Joanna [Gift of God], who was son of Rhesa [Head], who was son of Zorobabel [Born in Babylon], who was son of Salathiel [Asked of God], who was son of Neri [Yahweh is my Lamp],

28 Who was son of Melchi [My King], who was son of Addi [Ornament], who was son of Cosam [Divining], who was son of Elmodam [Measure], who was son of Er [Watchful],

29 Who was son of Jose [He Will be Sustained by Yahweh], who was son of Eliezer [God is His Help], who was son of Jorim [Whom Yahweh Has Exalted], who was son of Matthat [Gift of God], who was son of Levi [Joined],

30 Who was son of Simeon [Harkening], who was son of Judah [He Shall be Praised], who was son of Joseph [Let Him Add], who was son of Jonan [Yahweh is a Gracious Giver], who was son of Eliakim [God Rising],

31 Who was son of Melea [My Dear Friend], who was son of Menan [Numbered], who was son of Mattatha [Givingness], who was son of Nathan [Given], who was son of David [Beloved],

which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi,
 30 Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim,
 31 Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David,
 32 Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson,
 33 Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda,
 34 Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nahor,
 35 Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala,
 36 Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech,
 37 Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan,
 38 Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.⁹

32 Who was son of Jesse [Wealthy], who was son of Obed [Serving], who was son of Boaz [In Him is Strength], who was son of Salmon [A Garment], who was son of Naasson [Enchanter],
 33 Who was son of Aminadab [One of the Prince's People], who was son of Aram [High], who was son of Esrom [Enclosed], who was son of Phares [a Breach], who was son of Judah [He Shall be Praised],
 34 Who was son of Jacob [Heel-catcher or Supplanter], who was son of Isaac [Laughter], who was son of Abraham [Father of a Multitude], who was son of Thera [Station], who was son of Nahor [Snorting],
 35 Who was son of Saruch [Intertwined], who was son of Ragau [Friend, Shepherd], who was son of Phalec [Division], who was son of Heber [The Region Beyond], who was son of Sala [Sprout],
 36 Who was son of Cainan [Their Smith], who was son of Arphaxad [Stronghold of Chaldees], who was son of Shem [Name], who was son of Noe [Rest], who was son of Lamech [Powerful],
 37 Who was son of Methuselah [Man of the Spear], who was son of Enoch [Dedicated], who was son of Jared [Descent], who was son of Maleleel [Praise of God], who was son of Cainan [Their Smith],
 38 Who was son of Enos [Mortal Man], who was son of Seth [Compensation or Foundation], who was son of Adam [Of the Red Earth or Red], who was son of God [I WILL BE or I AM].

1. 28-29 AD, or 26-27 AD if Luke is dating Tiberius' reign from his co-regency with Augustus, which occurred two years before he became Caesar (Suetonius *De Vita Caesarum--Tiberius* XXI). The latter is a strong possibility since Luke uses a weak word for "reign" (a form of the word *hegemon*, that we noted previously indicates a governorship).
 2. Some people confuse this Lysanias with one executed by Cleopatra years earlier, and claim the text is in error. In fact, archeological evidence has shown a Lysanias did rule in Abilene up to 30 AD.
 3. This dual priesthood reference traces itself to the fact that the Romans were bartering off the priesthood to the highest bidder on a yearly basis. The Torah, of course, forbade this and allowed the High Priest to serve for life.
 4. This hostile tone, other Gospels show, is directed toward the religious leaders of Jerusalem who, perhaps hypocritically, come for baptism. If John were an Essene, his hatred for the Pharisees would certainly be in keeping with how Essenes felt toward the Pharisees.
 5. The stones in all likelihood were the 12 stones erected by Joshua to commemorate the crossing of the Jordan River, for he crossed in this area near Bethabara (Bethany). The area was also famous for Naaman's being cleansed here, and for Elijah's ascent to heaven.
 6. A verse directly contradicting the theology of some denominations that teach it is sinful to be in the military.
 7. Those 'baptized with fire' are the enemies of God as the next verse shows.
 8. As noted in the Matthew commentary, this is probably Mary's genealogy, which, according to custom, places Joseph as "the son of Heli" since he, as the husband, is head of the family and passes on the birthright. (The text in Greek also is worded differently when we come to Joseph: "...being the son of Joseph, of the Heli, of the Matthat," etc.) David Stern suggests this is the genealogy of Joseph's mother, which is a possibility for some reason never considered by skeptics. Julius Africanus claimed that descendants of Jesus' relatives asserted that Luke's genealogy is also that of Joseph, but traced through different males because of Levirate marriages in the line that Matthew does not list. Against this, for one thing, is the fact that the Jerusalem Talmud appears to confirm that Mary was the daughter of Heli, although some dispute that the woman spoken of therein is the Mary.
 9. Though the name of God (YHVH) is traditionally rendered as "I AM," a more precise translation is "HE WHO WILL BE," for it is not possible to say "I am" in ancient Hebrew. In Exodus 3:14, when God speaks to Moses, He technically says, "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE," not "I AM THAT I AM."

LUKE CHAPTER 4

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,
 2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.
 3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.¹
 4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.
 5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.
 6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.
 7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.
 8 And Jesus answered, and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
 9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:
 10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:
 11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
 12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
 13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.
 14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.
 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.
 16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.
 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,
 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.²
 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.
 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.
 22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?
 23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.
 24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

LUKE CHAPTER 4

1 And Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the deserts,
 2 Where he was tempted for forty days by the devil. During this time he ate nothing, and at the end he was very hungry.
 3 Then the devil said to him: If you're the Son of God, command this rock to become bread!
 4 Jesus answered him by saying: It is written that, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God's mouth!*
 5 The devil took him up to a high mountain where he showed Jesus all the empires of the world in a moment of time.
 6 The devil then said to him: I will give you all the power and glory of these kingdoms, for they have been handed over to me and to whomever I wish to bestow them.
 7 If you will now bend your knee and do homage to me, all of it will be yours!
 8 Jesus answered him: Get behind me, Satan! It is written, *You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve!*
 9 Then the devil brought him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the Temple. He said: If you're the Son of God, jump off from here [for the people to see],
 10 For it is written, **He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:**
 11 **And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.**
 12 But Jesus answered him: It is said, *You shall not tempt the Lord your God!*
 13 When the devil had finished all his temptations, he left Jesus for a time.
 14 Then Jesus returned with the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and word of his exploits spread throughout the region.
 15 And he taught in the synagogues, being highly honored by all who heard him.
 16 Eventually, he came to Nazareth, where he had grown up; and as he usually did, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to give the Torah reading.
 17 It happened that he was given the scroll of Isaiah that Sabbath, and he unrolled the scroll to a certain place, and read:
 18 **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,**
 19 **To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.**
 20 Jesus stopped reading at that point and rolled up the scroll, handing it to the attendant to be put away. Then he sat down with every eye in the synagogue on him.
 21 He began saying to the assembly: This day, the Scriptures you have heard are being fulfilled.
 22 Everyone knew there was something unique about him, and that he spoke with amazing charisma and authority, but still they said: Isn't this Joseph's son?
 23 And Jesus replied: You will no doubt quote me the saying, *"Doctor, heal yourself!"* Let's see you do the

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;
 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.
 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.
 28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,³
 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.⁴
 30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,
 31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.
 32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.
 33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil⁵, and cried out with a loud voice,
 34 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.
 35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.
 36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.
 37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.
 38 And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother⁶ was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.
 39 And he stood over her, and rebuked⁷ the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.
 40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.
 41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.
 42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.
 43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.
 44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

same miracles at home that you did in Capernaum!"
 24 Truly, no prophet is accepted in his own country!
 25 But I tell you truthfully, there were many Jewish widows in Israel during the days of Elijah when the rain was shut up in the heavens for three and-a-half years, causing a great famine in all the land.
 26 But Elijah was sent to none of these, but to Sarepta in Sidon, to a *Gentile* widow there!
 27 There were also many lepers in Israel when Elisha the prophet had *his* ministry, yet none were healed except Naaman, a *Syrian*!
 28 When the men in the synagogue heard these words [about Gentiles being preferred over Jews], they were enraged!
 29 And they rose up, and forced Jesus out of the city to the edge of a cliff the city was built on, planning to throw him off [as a precursor to stoning him].
 30 But he [became invisible, and] passed through the crowd. Then he left the area,
 31 And came to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, where he began teaching each Sabbath.
 32 Everyone was amazed at his teachings, for he spoke with unquestioned authority.
 33 Now in the synagogue was a man possessed by a demon, and he cried out loudly:
 34 Leave us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!
 35 Jesus rebuked the spirit, saying: Shut up, and come out of him! And after the demon cast the man onto the ground in the midst of the assembly, it came out of him and left the man unharmed.
 36 All the synagogue was amazed, and spoke amongst themselves, saying: What new sort of preaching is this?! He commands demons with authority and power, and they come out!
 37 And his reputation spread to every part of the region.
 38 Jesus left the synagogue and went into Shimon's house. There, Shimon's mother-in-law had a serious fever, and they asked him to help her.
 39 He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and immediately it left her. The woman then arose and prepared food for everyone.
 40 Now at dusk, people brought the sick and diseased to him, and he laid hands on them and healed every one!
 41 Demon spirits came out of many of them, crying out: "You are the Anointed One, the Son of God!" as they did. But Jesus rebuked them, and commanded them not to speak, for they knew he was the Messiah.
 42 At dawn, Jesus left the house and went out to a deserted place [to pray], and the people sought him out. When they found him, they begged him not to leave them.
 43 But he said: I must preach the message of the Kingdom of God to other cities as well, for that is why I have been sent.
 44 So he went about Galilee, preaching in the synagogues.

1. The devil here is trying to entice Jesus into using His own power to meet His needs instead of relying on *God's* provision.

2. This quotation from Isaiah 61 omits the last portion of verse 2, which promises the day of God's vengeance, for Jesus will not come to enact that prophecy until the end of the Age.

3. They would indeed be filled with wrath, for Jesus has just suggested that God's blessing is being poured out on the pagan Gentiles

rather than the Chosen People.

4. They are actually trying to stone Jesus, for this was the usual manner. If one survived the fall, he was finished off with rocks.

5. It is noteworthy that the first demon Jesus casts out is from a person in church as he should be.

6. Showing Peter was indeed married, as probably were all the apostles (1 Cor. 9:5).

7. The word here for “**rebuked**” is the same word used for casting out a demon, and suggests the fever could have been demonic in origin. Certainly, the Gospels show that demons caused physical problems (Matthew 9:32, Luke 13:11), and the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q560: “*I command you who enter the body, the male and female sickening demon...demon of fever, chills, and chest pains...*”) likewise record an exorcism formula attributing fevers to demons.

LUKE CHAPTER 5

1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.¹

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.²

12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

LUKE CHAPTER 5

1 In time, as Jesus stood by the shore of the Sea of Galilee and the people thronged about him to hear him proclaim the Message of God,

2 He saw a couple of boats beached along the shore as their owners were on land, washing their nets.

3 Jesus climbed into one, which happened to be Shimon's, and he asked him to row out a few yards into the lake. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When his teaching was over, he said to Shimon: Row out to a deep place, and let your nets down for a catch.

5 But Shimon answered: Rabbi--we worked like slaves all night, and caught nothing [and daytime is the wrong time to fish, since they will see and avoid the nets, plus they all feed by the shore anyway]. Nevertheless, I'll let down a net at your word.

6 After they did this, the net was filled with so many fish that it started to break!

7 Peter and Andrew then waved for their partners in the other boat to come help them, so they came to their aid. Even so, there were so many fish between the two boats that they were nearly swamped!

8 When Shimon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, and exclaimed: Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!

9 For he and the others in the boat were astonished at the great haul of fish they caught,

10 As were James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, who were Shimon's partners in the other boat. But Jesus replied to Shimon: Fear not, for from now on you will catch men!

11 After the boats landed, the fishermen left all behind, and followed Jesus.

12 Now it came to pass that Jesus entered into a certain city, and a man with leprosy who saw him fell on his face and pleaded with him, saying: Lord--if you want, you can make me clean!

13 Jesus reached out and touched him, saying: I will--be cleansed! And immediately the leprosy vanished!

14 Jesus warned him: Tell no one about this, but go and show yourself to the High Priest, and offer up the sacrifice for a cleansed leper Moses required, as a testimony to the priests.

15 But after this, his fame spread everywhere, and vast hosts of people came to hear him teach, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

16 Eventually, Jesus withdrew into the desert, and prayed.

17 Some time after this, Jesus was teaching, and sitting there were Pharisees and masters of Mosaic Law who had come from every part of Israel to listen to him; and on that day the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

18 While this was going on, some men arrived carrying

18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

19 And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.³

21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?⁴

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

23 Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.

28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?⁵

31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?

34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

36 And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.

37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

38 But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

39 No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

a litter upon which lay a paralytic man; and they tried to get him inside the house so they could lay him before Jesus [for healing].

19 But when they couldn't get through the crowd, they found a way up to the roof of the house and pried some tiles off to make a hole. Then they lowered the man and his litter down into the midst of the crowd before Jesus.

20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic: Man, the sins you committed [that caused this malady] are forgiven you.

21 Now the Torah teachers and Pharisees were offended at hearing this, and wondered such things as: *Why is this man speaking blasphemously [as if he is God]? Who can forgive sins but God alone?!*

22 But when Jesus perceived what was in their minds, he answered: What are you debating in your hearts-- 23 Whether it's easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," than it is to say, "Rise up and walk"?

24 But so you can know that the Son of Man has the right on earth to forgive sins, I say: Rise, pick up your bed, and go walk home!

25 And the man was immediately healed, picked up his litter, and walked home, glorifying God.

26 Everyone was astonished beyond comprehension, and glorified God as well. They were also filled with awe, and said among themselves: We have seen strange things today!

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named [Matthew] sitting at the customs table, and he told him: Follow me!

28 Hearing this, [Matthew] dropped everything, and rose up to follow.

29 Later that night, [Matthew] held a banquet in his honor, and he invited his fellow tax collectors, along with many others, who sat and dined with them.

30 But the Torah teachers among the Pharisees grumbled to the disciples, asking: Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinful people?!

31 Jesus heard, and replied: The well don't need a doctor--the sick do!

32 I came not to call the righteous to repentance, but the sinners!

33 [Some of John's disciples] asked: Why do John's followers--and the Pharisees--fast, and pray [and afflict their souls on a regular basis], while your followers feast and drink?

34 Jesus responded: What groomsmen fast [and mourn] in the presence of the bridegroom?

35 But the days will come soon enough when the bridegroom will be taken away, and then they will fast [and mourn].

36 Jesus also spoke a parable to them: No one sews a patch of new cloth on an old, used garment because they are incompatible: The new patch will shrink in the wash, and pull the garment apart!

37 Likewise, no one puts new wine into old, stiff wineskins, or the fermenting wine will split the wineskins and leak out.

38 Fresh wine must be put in fresh wineskins, and both will be preserved!

39 And no man who's used to drinking old wine wants new wine, for he says, "Old wine is better."

1. This story is actually quite humorous. Jesus has told Peter to let down his “nets,” but the text indicates the “net” started to break. What probably happened was that the usual nets Peter used for fishing had been laid out on shore to dry and Peter, in his unbelief, didn’t want to reuse them in what seemed to be a fruitless task. So he instead let down an older spare net that filled to capacity and started to break because the better nets were up on shore.
2. A powerful verse when you consider they apparently abandoned their fishing business to follow a man they had just met. They may indeed have left immediately, or possibly as soon as they had sold the fish to pay off their debts.
3. Yet another instance where Jesus connects physical illness with sin, a fact that too many modern denominations and theologians pass over.
4. Their thoughts are not unreasonable, and ultimately show that Jesus was indeed God in the flesh.
5. We cannot possibly understand how politically incorrect Jesus’ dining with this group was in that time and culture. The closest we might come to understanding would be to imagine a religious Jew fellowshiping at the table with Jewish *Kapos* (Jewish Death Camp guards working for the Nazis against their own people to save their skins). In fact, if a Jew in that day were even touched by a tax collector he would spit, burn his clothes, and then take a ritual baptism to remove the defilement.

LUKE CHAPTER 6

1 And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first¹ that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.

2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?²

3 And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him;

4 How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?

5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.³

6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.⁴

8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes,

16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

LUKE CHAPTER 6

1 One day, during a Sabbath for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus and the disciples were passing through a wheat field, and the disciples [--but not Jesus--] plucked some of the wheat heads and rolled them in their palms to loosen some of the kernels to eat.

2 Some Pharisees who saw this said: [Why are you breaking the Sabbath laws by harvesting grain?!]

3 Jesus answered: Did you never even read so much as what David did when he and his men were hungry?

4 How he went into the House of God, and brought out the *shewbread* so they could all eat? As you know, the Law technically says the *shewbread* is only for the priests to eat. [Yet God wasn’t offended by this, was He?]

5 So I tell you, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath [and can rule with authority on what may and may not be done on it].

6 On another Sabbath, Jesus entered a synagogue to teach, and in it was a man whose right hand was deformed.

7 The Torah teachers and Pharisees now were watching to see if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath so they could have a basis for criticizing him.

8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said to the man with the deformed hand: Arise, and stand before us. And the man did so.

9 Then Jesus said to the religious leaders: I have just one question for you: Does the Law teach you to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it?

10 When no one answered, Jesus looked around at all of them, and then told the man: Stretch out your hand! The man did so, and it was healed and made whole just like his other hand!

11 The religious leaders were furious at this, so they met together and began debating what to do to Jesus.

12 Around this time, Jesus went up upon a mountain to pray, and he was in prayer all night to God.

13 At dawn, he called his disciples and selected twelve men from them he also named as apostles. They included:

14 Shimon, whom he also named Peter; and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot,

16 Jude, the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, who was the traitor.

17 And he came down to a plain with his disciples where a throng of people from Judea and Jerusalem, and the

18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.
 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.
 20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.
 21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.
 22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.
 23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.
 24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.
 25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.
 26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.
 27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,
 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.
 29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other⁵; and him that taketh away thy cloke⁶ forbid not to take thy coat also.
 30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.
 31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.
 32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.
 33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.
 34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.
 35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.
 36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.
 37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged:⁷ condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:
 38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.
 39 And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?
 40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.
 41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?⁸

coasts of Tyre and Sidon were waiting. They had all come to hear him, and to be healed of their afflictions,
 18 And to be delivered from the influence of demons; and all of them were healed.
 19 Everyone tried to touch Jesus, for power went out from him and healed all!
 20 Jesus looked upon his disciples, and said: Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours.
 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall eat, and be full. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.
 22 Blessed are you when men shall hate, shun, and speak ill of your name for the Son of Man's sake.
 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for your reward in heaven will be great! Their fathers treated the prophets the same way!
 24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received all the comfort you will ever get!
 25 Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.
 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that was how the *false* prophets were treated by *their* fathers!
 27 But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you.
 28 Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who take advantage of you.
 29 [And if someone insults you, ignore it and keep silent.] If someone takes your coat away, don't try to stop him from taking your shirt away too.
 30 Give to anyone who asks, and don't seek to recover what someone else has taken from you.
 31 And treat men the way you would want them to treat you.
 32 For if you do no more than love those who love you back, what merit is there in that? Even sinners love their own friends and family!
 33 And if you only do good to those who likewise do good to you in return, what merit is there in that? Even sinners do that!
 34 And if you lend money or goods only to those you can expect to help you in like manner someday, what merit is in that? Even sinners loan back and forth to each other.
 35 But love your enemies, and do *them* good. Lend to them when they are in need, and don't think of repayment. In doing this, your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Highest, for He is kind even to the ungrateful and the evil [in hope they will realize their wrongs, and repent].
 36 So be merciful, as your Father is merciful.
 37 Don't become your own judge and jury [and take vengeance for wrongs done to you]! Don't condemn someone for what they've done to you, and then God won't condemn you for what you've done to *Him*. Instead, forgive--and God will likewise forgive your wrongdoing.
 38 Give to others, and it will be given back to you in great abundance. For the same measure that you give will return to you.
 39 Then Jesus spoke this parable to them: Can the blind lead the blind? Won't they both fall into a ditch?
 40 The student is not above his master, and the perfect disciple is the one who is just like the master he was taught by.

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

44 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.⁹

46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

41 So then--why do some see a splinter in their brother's eye, yet miss the log that is in their own?

42 Or how can one say to his brother, "Brother--let me pull that splinter out of your eye," when there is a log in his own? You hypocrite--take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will be able to see well enough to take the splinter out of your brother's!

43 You see, a good tree doesn't sprout bad fruit, nor does a rotten tree sprout good fruit.

44 A tree--good or bad--is what it is, and reveals what it is by the fruit that it bears. You don't get figs off thorn vines, nor do you pluck grapes from a bramble bush.

45 Likewise, a good man with a good heart bears good fruit, just as an evil man with an evil heart brings forth bad fruit--and the things you say reveal what sort of heart you have!

46 So why would you pay lip service to me, saying, "Lord! Lord!" and then ignore what I tell you to do?

47 Whoever comes to me, hears and understands my teachings, and *does* put them into practice in his life, is like this:

48 He's like a man who built a house with a good, deep foundation laid in the bedrock, and when the flood came and washed against the house, it could not be destroyed because it was founded upon solid rock.

49 But he who hears my teachings and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on a flood plain with no foundation. As soon as the storm came and the river rose, it immediately fell and was washed away!

1. The words, "**second Sabbath after the first**" indicate this was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was also called "the day of the Sabbaths." In Acts 16:13, when Paul goes to the river on "**the Sabbath**," the word there is actually "**Sabbaths**," showing it was also was the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

2. This verse is one commonly seized upon by Jews to accuse Jesus of committing sin and blatantly violating the Torah. As mentioned in the commentary in Matthew, there was a dispute between the Judeans and the Galileans on this point of technicality. David Flusser points out the disciples appear to be following the ruling of the Galilean sage Judah bar Ilai, who held this was a technically permissible means to obtain some morsels of food on the Sabbath. Jesus Himself appears to be moving beyond this issue, and declaring that the reasonable needs of preserving life are permissible on the Sabbath even if doing so profanes the Sabbath. For instance, it is forbidden to kindle a fire on the Sabbath, but rabbinic law permits the starting of a fire the day before, and allows it to keep burning during the Sabbath, thus using a loophole around the commandment to get the benefit of fire while technically not violating the commandment. The Karaites, a Jewish movement of ancient history, were much more conservative than the rabbinic Jews on this, and extinguished their fires on the Sabbath--and many froze to death in winter because of the practice. It is also interesting to note that Jesus Himself is not specifically shown to have been partaking in the practice since the text says that "**the disciples**" are the ones doing it.

Interestingly, one manuscript has an addendum to this story in which Jesus later that day encounters a man working in the fields, to whom He says that if he knows what he is doing, then he is blessed--but if not, then he is a Law-breaker.

3. If it wasn't clear before, it is clear to them now that Jesus is declaring that He, not the elders, defines how the Torah is to be followed, and what does and does not constitute sin. This would have been a controversial stand to the religious leaders, for in years past, the sage Shimon ben Shatah opposed Alexander Jannaeus, establishing the precedent that a king did not have the right to judge religious law, but that this privilege rested in the hands of the elders who under the system established by Moses represent the authority of God. This concept appears to have taken root and flourished to the point that the elders of Christ's time thus expected (as do some Jews and Moslems today) the Messiah to submit to their authority, a belief Jesus utterly rejected.

4. A verse showing that these are probably Pharisees from the school of Shammai, who unquestionably would see healing on the Sabbath as "work," in opposition to many from the school of Hillel who may have seen it as a good deed.

5. As noted in the commentary on Matthew, to be "struck on the cheek" meant to suffer a verbal insult.

6. In our language, this would be understood as: "*And him that takes away your pants, forbid not to take the shirt off your back also.*"

7. This is the only verse of Scripture that most unbelievers know. Jesus has just been speaking of personal wrongdoing done to someone, and the saying must be understood in that context. Thus, when Jesus says to "**Judge not, lest ye be judged**," He is saying: "Don't become your own avenger against someone who commits a wrongdoing against you personally. Instead, forgive them, and God will likewise show mercy to you." He is certainly *not* suggesting Christians must "Not judge," and keep silent in the face of sin and behavior that can only lead to judgment and damnation.

8. A Hebraism Jesus is quoting, not inventing.

9. Verses 43-45 build upon Ecclesiasticus 27:6, which those who claim the Apocrypha is never used by Jesus should realize: *As the dressing of a tree showeth the fruit thereof, so a word out of the thought of the heart of man.*

LUKE CHAPTER 7

1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.
 2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.
 3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.
 4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:
 5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.
 6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:¹
 7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.
 8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
 9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
 10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.
 11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.
 12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.
 13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.
 14 And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.
 15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.
 16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.
 17 And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about.
 18 And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.
 19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?²
 20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?
 21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.
 22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and

LUKE CHAPTER 7

1 After Jesus finished teaching in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.
 2 Now there was a chief Roman centurion [--a *Principale*--] who had a slave that was very dear to him. This same slave was ill, and on the verge of death.
 3 When the centurion heard of Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to beg Jesus to come heal his slave.
 4 When the elders found Jesus, they urgently begged him to help, saying that the officer was worthy of his intervention.
 5 Because, they said, he loves our people, and even paid for our synagogue to be built.
 6 So Jesus went with them, and as he neared the centurion's house, the officer sent some friends to him, saying: Lord--don't trouble yourself on account of me, for I am not worthy that you should enter my house.
 7 Nor did I think myself worthy to come ask your help myself, but just command my boy be healed, and that will be enough.
 8 For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me, and I tell one "Go," and he goes; or say to another, "Come," and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this," and he does.
 9 When Jesus heard these things, he was amazed at the centurion and the message he sent, and turned toward the crowd following, saying: I have yet to find a Jew in Israel with such strong faith!
 10 The people who were sent then returned to the house and found the slave who had been sick was now healed.
 11 The next day, Jesus went into the city of Nain, and many of his disciples followed along with a large crowd.
 12 Now as Jesus approached the city gate, a funeral procession was leaving, for a man had died who was an only child, and his mother--a widow--was leaving to bury him. A large crowd of mourners from the city also accompanied her.
 13 When the Lord saw the woman, he had compassion on her, and said to her: Don't cry!
 14 And he came up and touched the bier, and those carrying it halted. Then he said: Young man, I say to you--arise!
 15 Then he who was dead sat up and started speaking, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.
 16 Great fear fell upon the people, and they gave glory to God, saying: "A great prophet has arisen among us!"; and, "God has visited His people!"
 17 This story spread throughout Judea and everywhere around it.
 18 Meanwhile, John the Baptist's disciples told him about all Jesus was doing [along with reports of his teachings, including not to use violence, but to love one's enemies].
 19 So John summoned and sent two of these disciples to ask Jesus: Are you the only Messiah coming, or is there another Messiah coming after you [who will deliver the people from Rome]?
 20 When the men arrived and met Jesus, they said: John the Baptizer has sent us to ask: Are you the one who was prophesied to come? Or should we look for another coming after you [who will fulfill *all* the promises regarding the Messianic Age]?
 21 Jesus said nothing, but immediately turned about, healing everyone in sight, casting out demons, and giving

heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.
 23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.
 24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?
 25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.
 26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.
 27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
 28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.
 29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.
 30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.³
 31 And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?
 32 They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.
 33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.
 34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!
 35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.
 36 And one of the Pharisees⁴ desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.
 37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,
 38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.
 39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.
 40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.
 41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.
 42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly

sight to the blind.
 22 Then Jesus returned to John's disciples, and told them: Go back and tell John what you just saw--how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Gospel is preached to the poor.
 23 And tell him: "Blessed is he who is not offended [if I don't do what he wants or expects me to do]!"
 24 As the two messengers of John departed, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about him: What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed blowing back and forth in the wind?
 25 What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft, costly garments? No--those who wear regal robes, and live in comfort, are found in kings' courts.
 26 So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, he was, I tell you--and much more than *just* a prophet!
 27 John was he about whom it was written, **Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.**
 28 For I tell you, among all the children ever born of women, there has not been a greater prophet than John the Baptist! Even so, the lowest-ranking member in the Kingdom of God is greater than he!
 29 Now everyone who believed John, including the tax collectors, agreed with the plan of God, receiving John's baptism [of repentance].
 30 But the Pharisees and the Torah teachers rejected the plan God had for *them* because they rejected John's baptism.
 31 And [regarding these groups,] the Lord said: What shall I liken the men of this generation to? What sort of men are they?
 32 They are like spoiled brats sitting in a marketplace, calling out to each other: "You didn't dance to the tune of our wedding march, so we played a funeral dirge and you wouldn't respond to that either. [What's *your* problem?]"
 33 For John the Baptist was [a Nazirite,] living a Spartan existence in the deserts, neither eating bread nor drinking wine--and you said, ["He's crazy!"]
 34 But then the Son of Man came, willing to eat and drink with you in your houses, and yet you say: "This is a gluttonous drunkard who wants to get in good with tax collectors and sinners!"
 35 [As all wise people display what they are by what they say and do, so do all witless people!]
 36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to dine with him, so he went to the man's house and reclined to eat.
 37 A woman in the town with a bad reputation as a sinner, after hearing that Jesus was having dinner at the Pharisee's house, came and brought an alabaster vial of ointment.
 38 She stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. Then she dried them with her long hair. Finally, she kissed his feet and anointed them with perfumed oil from the vial.
 39 When the Pharisee who invited him saw this, he was offended by such an inappropriate act, and thought to himself, *If this man were truly a prophet, he'd know who and what sort of woman he is letting touch him, for she is a sinner.*
 40 Jesus knew what he was thinking, and so he spoke, saying: Simon--I have something to tell you. Simon replied: Teacher, say on!
 41 Once, there was a banker that had two debtors who

forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?
 43 Simon answered, and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.
 44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.
 45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.
 46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.⁵
 47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.
 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.
 49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?
 50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

owed him money. One owed him five hundred coins, and the other fifty.
 42 Neither could repay the debt, and he decided to freely forgive both of them, and write the debts off. Now--which of the two do you think [would be more grateful,] and love him the most?
 43 Simon answered: I suppose the one who was forgiven the greater debt. And Jesus replied: You have answered correctly.
 44 Then Jesus turned to the woman, and said to Simon: See this woman? I entered into your house and you didn't even offer me some water to wash my feet, but she came and washed my feet with her tears, and dried them with the hair of her head.
 45 You gave me no kiss of greeting, but since I came in, she has not stopped covering my feet with kisses.
 46 You didn't anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with perfumed ointment.
 47 Because of this, I tell you her many sins are forgiven, for she loved greatly. But he who is forgiven little, also loves little.
 48 Then he told the woman: Your sins are forgiven you!
 49 Others sitting at the dinner table began thinking: *Who does he think he is, pronouncing sins forgiven?* [Only God can do that!]
 50 But Jesus said to the woman: Your faith has saved you--go with peace upon you.

1. Possibly a "God-fearer," for the centurion seems to be aware that for Jesus to enter his house would be a breach of rabbinic law (specifically Shammai's edicts), and would defile Him in the minds of the Jews. A point must also be made about this incident and the same incident in Matthew 8, where the sick person is called a "servant" (slave). Lower ranking legionnaires and officers were forbidden to be married while in military service, but some of the better-paid men had unofficial households outside of the barracks with women they either lived with, or else purchased as slaves and "married" unofficially. The offspring of such a union with a slave woman would be both the man's son and also his legal slave. The word translated "servant" in verse 7 (*pais*) is different from the word used for "servant" in verse 2. *Pais* means a *boy* or a *son*, revealing this person was both the son and slave of the centurion.
 2. John, like the remainder of the Jews, is far more concerned with the conquering Messiah who will free the people from oppression, than he is with a Messiah who deals only with sin and talks about turning the other cheek. He thus asks if Jesus is the Messiah who will fulfill both Messianic roles, or if there is another Messiah to come who will usher in the Kingdom.
 3. A critical verse showing that God recognized the Pharisee movement and planned to use it, but the leaders (Shammai and Gamaliel), by rejecting the ministry of John since they sincerely do not see themselves as sinners because of their perceived obedience to God's commandments, ultimately reject God's plan for the movement.
 4. The Pharisee may be Simon, the father of Judas, and this probably takes place in Bethany. The woman may be Mary Magdalene or Mary the sister of Lazarus, depending on whether this and the event of John 12 are two separate events.
 5. Although Simon had invited Jesus to dine at his house, he apparently failed to render to Him the various honors due an invited guest. It is possible that Jesus was invited only out of a courtesy to his son Judas.

LUKE CHAPTER 8

1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,
 2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,
 3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.
 4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:
 5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.
 6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked

LUKE CHAPTER 8

1 After this, Jesus went throughout every village and town that he could, preaching the glad tidings of the message of the Messianic Kingdom, and the twelve disciples followed him,
 2 Along with certain women whom he had healed of demons and infirmities. These included Mary, called Magdalene, who had been possessed by seven demons,
 3 Joanna--wife to Herod's steward Chuza--Susanna, and many others who supported Jesus' ministry with their own funds.
 4 And when a great crowd from every city was assembled to hear Jesus speak, he told them a parable:
 5 A farmer went out to sow a field. As he did, some seed fell by the side of the road, was trodden down, and the birds came and ate it up.
 6 Other seed fell on a rock with thin topsoil, and as soon as it sprouted, it withered away because it could get no water.

moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.¹

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.

18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.²

19 Then came to him his mother and his brethren³, and could not come at him for the press.

20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

21 And he answered, and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

22 Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

23 But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.

24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked⁴ the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

26 And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

7 Some seed fell into weeds, and they sprang up with it, and choked it.

8 But other seed fell on good ground and sprang up, eventually bearing fruit a hundredfold! When Jesus had said these things, he cried out: Whoever can understand, let him understand.

9 The disciples asked: What does this parable mean?

10 Jesus answered: To you disciples is given the honor of understanding the mysteries of the Messianic Kingdom. But outsiders must hear only parables, *that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand*.

11 Now here is what it all meant: The seed is the Message of God.

12 Those by the wayside are the ones who hear the Message, but the devil comes and takes the Message from their hearts, lest they believe and be saved.

13 The ones on the rock are those who hear the Message, and receive it joyfully at first—but they have shallow roots [and temporary faith]. Thus, they eventually fall away because of temptation [or trial].

14 Those among the thorns are the people who, after they've heard the Message, get distracted by focusing on riches, cares, and pleasures of this life so they bear no mature fruit of the Message in their lives.

15 But those on good ground are those with good and honest hearts who hear the Message, do what it says, and show the fruit of that in their lives through their endurance.

16 No man, when he has lit a candle, covers it with a basket or hides it under a bed—you put it in a candlestick so anyone coming near can see by its light.

17 For nothing can be hidden forever; [the truth of what a man is will eventually be revealed for all to see].

18 So be careful of how you hear, for [he who listens with the right sort of heart will be given more light of truth; but he who listens with a corrupted heart will have taken from him what little truth he may already have as he grows in the darkness of deception]!

19 Then Jesus' mother and brethren came, but could not get near Jesus because of the crowds.

20 Word reached him, and he was told: Your mother and brethren are standing outside, wanting to see you.

21 But Jesus answered: My mother and brethren are those who hear and do the Message of God!

22 One day, Jesus got in a boat with the disciples, and he said: Let's go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. So they hoisted sail.

23 Now as they sailed off, Jesus fell asleep, and a great storm arose that threatened to swamp the boat.

24 The disciples scrambled to awaken him, saying: Master! Master! We're going to drown! Then Jesus stood up and rebuked the wind, then rebuked the tumultuous water, and they immediately quieted down.

25 Jesus said to the disciples: Where is your faith? But they, being afraid and amazed, mumbled to one another: What kind of man is this, that he commands the wind and the waves, and they obey him?!

26 They eventually arrived in the land of the Gadarenes, which is on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, next to the district of Galilee.

27 When they landed, they were met by a naked man from Gadara who had been possessed by demons for a

27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man^s, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

32 And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went, and told it in the city and in the country.

35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

36 They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.

41 And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:

42 For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd.

45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I

long time. He dwelt in no house, but in the graveyard tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting: What do we have to do with each other, Jesus, Son of God Most High?! I beg you not to torment me!

29 He said this because Jesus had been ordering the demon to come out. Now this demon had often manifested itself with great violence. The man had, for instance, frequently been bound hand and foot with chains and ropes, but the demon in him had snapped them with ease, and drove him into the wilderness.

30 [Because the demon wasn't going quickly,] Jesus asked: What is your name? Since there were many of them, it answered: We're a whole legion of demons!

31 And they begged him not to send them to the Abyss.

32 It happened that there was a large herd of pigs feeding on a nearby hill, and the demons begged Jesus to allow them to possess the animals, to which he agreed.

33 So the demons went out of the man and possessed the pigs. Then the maddened herd ran off a cliff, and drowned.

34 When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran into the city and spread word of it throughout the area.

35 Then everyone came to see for themselves, and found Jesus. The former demoniac was with him, sitting at Jesus' feet clothed and back in his right mind. Seeing this, the crowd didn't know what to think, and were afraid.

36 Others who saw it explained to them how the demon-possessed man had been healed.

37 This made them even more afraid, and everyone from the Gadarene area started begging Jesus to go somewhere else, so Jesus started to board the ship, and return to the other side.

38 The former demoniac begged to go with him but Jesus sent him away, saying:

39 Return to your family, and tell what great things God has done for you today! This he did, telling the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

40 When Jesus crossed back to the east side of the lake, the usual crowd was waiting, and joyfully welcomed him back.

41 Now there was a ruler of the local synagogue named Jairus, and he fell at Jesus' feet, begging him to come to his house.

42 For his only child, a daughter twelve years of age, was dying from an illness. Jesus agreed to go with him, but he could hardly move for the press of the crowd.

43 Among the crowd was a woman who had been stricken with a uterine discharge for twelve years. She had spent every cent she had on doctors, but they could not heal her malady.

44 She came up behind Jesus and touched the tassels of his prayer shawl--and instantly the blood ceased flowing!

45 Jesus immediately halted and asked: Who touched me? When everyone denied touching him, Peter and the others spoke up, saying: Master--the crowd is almost crushing you, and you're asking, "Who touched me?!"

46 But Jesus said: Someone touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me.

perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him and how she was healed immediately.⁶

48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.

50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.⁷

51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

52 And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

56 And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

47 When the woman realized she was found out, she came up, shaking in fear, and fell before him. Then she told her story in front of everyone, and how she was immediately healed.

48 Jesus told her: Daughter, don't worry. Your faith has made you whole. Go with peace upon you.

49 While he was speaking, someone came from Jairus' house, and said: Your daughter has died. Don't trouble the Master further.

50 But when Jesus heard this, he told Jairus: Don't fear! Just believe, and she will be made whole!

51 When he reached the house, he allowed no one else inside except for Peter, James, and John, and the girl's parents.

52 The mourners, meanwhile, were weeping, but Jesus said: Stop weeping! She is not dead—only asleep!

53 They laughed derisively at this statement because they knew she was dead.

54 He then cast out the mourners and took the girl by the hand, calling out: Girl, arise!

55 Her spirit then returned to her body, and she woke up. Jesus then told them to give her some meat.

56 Her parents were amazed, but he ordered them not to tell anyone about this miracle.

1. There is debate over what Jesus means to say here. Apparently, He does not want the masses to gain a clear understanding of His teachings, possibly to avoid bringing the conflict with the religious leaders to a head before the appointed time. Otherwise, there is indeed a principle shown throughout the Gospels that many truths are spiritually, not intellectually, perceived. (Isaiah prophesied that the generation Jesus would come to would be blind and deaf to God's message of truth.) Beyond all this, the parable is a major blow to those holding to the doctrine of "Once saved, always saved." Most of those mentioned received the word (initial salvation), but as time passes or as tribulations come, most of them fall away and are lost.

2. Jesus appears to be saying that a person with a good and honest heart who responds to the Gospel will advance in it, while someone who does not receive it will lose what little light he has been given and reach an even worse state.

3. The word here (*adelphos*) does refer to sons born to the same mother. However, it can theoretically be used for cousins, and these probably are not actual siblings since at the Crucifixion Jesus gives Mary over to John (John 19:27). Origen, it should be noted, claimed that some now-lost writings of Peter asserted these were sons of Joseph from a previous marriage, but as noted there is a problem with this idea as the birthright is passed down to Joseph's first-born son, which would otherwise disqualify Jesus from the inheritance of David's throne through Joseph.

4. The word is the same as that used for rebuking demons, and suggests the storm was demonically caused.

5. In comparison to Matthew's Gospel, Luke and Mark mention only one demoniac, whereas Matthew records there were two. If one wishes, he may call this a "contradiction." It is irrelevant either way since the intent of the writers is to convey an example of Jesus casting out multiple demons who acknowledged He was the Son of God, not to make a theological point of how many possessed men there were. Otherwise, some bad logic can be used to assert that, "Where you have two men you also have one, so there is no direct contradiction," but I personally have no respect for such a reach. A better point could be made that Luke realizes there were two demoniacs, but only one did the talking, hence his use of the phrase, "**a certain man**."

6. The reason she is hesitant to admit her action is that she has committed a sin by touching a man when in an unclean state, which is an act of defilement, and a stoning offense. As David Stern points out, the power of Christ is such that this act, rather than defiling Him as the Torah indicates, causes His righteousness to flow upon her and actually heal her infirmity.

7. An interesting verse that suggests the accomplishment of the miracle seemed less dependent on Christ's supernatural ability, and more upon the faith of the father *in* that ability.

LUKE CHAPTER 9

1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.

4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a

LUKE CHAPTER 9

1 Then Jesus gathered the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure disease.

2 He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God, and heal the sick.

3 And he told them: Take nothing for your journey. Not a staff. Not a bag. Not bread. Not money. Not more than one coat.

4 And whatever house you enter into, stay there until your work in that town is done, then depart.

5 And if people do not accept you, shake off the dust of your feet when you leave that city for a testimony

testimony against them.¹

6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead;²

8 And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

15 And they did so, and made them all sit down.

16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them³, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

18 And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;

22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.⁴

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

against them.

6 So the disciples departed to the various towns, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere they went.

7 Now Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, heard about what Jesus was doing and wasn't sure what to think, for some were saying John the Baptist must have risen from the dead.

8 Others thought it must be the coming of Elijah, or else that it was one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead.

9 But Herod said: I beheaded John, but who is this new man I'm hearing about? And he wanted to see Jesus.

10 Meanwhile, the apostles returned, and told Jesus how their activities had gone. Then Jesus took them into a desert place near Bethsaida.

11 When the crowd knew this, they followed, and Jesus welcomed them; and he taught everyone about the Kingdom of God. He also healed everyone who needed it.

12 Near dusk, the twelve came to Jesus, and said: Send the crowd away so they can go into the towns and countryside for food and lodging since we are in a desert.

13 But Jesus' reply was: *You* feed them! They said: All we have are five loaves and a couple of fish, unless we find some way to go buy enough food to feed this army of people!

14 You see, there were about five thousand men there. So Jesus said to the disciples: Sit them down in groups of fifty.

15 The disciples did as they were told, and sat the crowd down.

16 Then Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, and looking up into the sky he blessed God and began distributing to the disciples who, in turn, gave to the people.

17 And everyone ate until they were full, and the leftovers filled twelve baskets.

18 Some time after this incident, Jesus was praying by himself, and the disciples were with him. Ending his prayer, he asked them: Whom are the people saying that I am?

19 They answered: John the Baptist...Elijah...some even think you're one of the other ancient prophets, returned from the dead.

20 But Jesus asked: Whom do *you* say that I am? Peter replied: The Anointed One of God!

21 And he solemnly instructed them to tell no man this.

22 Then he warned them: The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the religious leaders, the Temple priests, and the Torah teachers. Then he will be slain, but be raised the third day.

23 And he said to them all: If any man will follow me, let him deny his own wants, and take up his cross and follow me day by day.

24 For whoever seeks to save his life will ultimately lose it, but whoever will lose his life for my sake will ultimately save it!

25 For what advantage is there to gain the whole world and in the end [lose your soul or be cast away from God]?

26 For anyone who shall be ashamed of me and my

27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease⁵ which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?⁶ Bring thy son hither.

42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.⁷

47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him,

48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

49 And John answered, and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him,

words will see me ashamed of him when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and that of his Father and the holy angels.

27 But I tell you truthfully, some are standing here who will not die before they glimpse the Kingdom of God!

28 Now about eight days after saying this, Jesus took Peter, John, and James up onto a mountain to pray.

29 As he prayed, his face was transformed, and his clothing became white and shining.

30 Then two men--Moses and Elijah--appeared, and began speaking with him!

31 Both prophets were in a glorified state, and spoke of what he was ordained to do and accomplish in Jerusalem before returning to heaven.

32 While this was happening, Peter and the others had fallen deeply asleep; and when they awakened, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with him.

33 [They were speechless,] but then, as the two prophets began to depart from Jesus, Peter called out to Jesus without thinking: Master--it is good that we are here! Let us make three shelters for you, Moses, and Elijah!

34 As he was speaking, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they feared as the cloud engulfed them.

35 A voice came forth from the cloud that said: This is my beloved Son--listen to him!

36 When the voice echoed away, the cloud vanished, and Jesus was alone with them. They kept this event to themselves, telling no one for quite some time what they had seen.

37 The next day, when they descended the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus.

38 Someone in the crowd caught Jesus' attention by saying: Master, I beg you--look upon my son, for he is my only child!

39 A demon comes upon him and causes him to fall down in an epileptic fit, making him foam at the mouth and thrash about, bruising him--and the fit lasts for some time!

40 I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they couldn't!

41 Jesus replied: O faithless and perverse generation! How long must I be here, and put up with you? Bring your son here.

42 As the boy was being brought up, the demon caused him to drop to the ground with an epileptic fit. Jesus then rebuked the demon and healed the boy, thereafter returning him to his father.

43 Everyone was amazed at this mighty demonstration of God's power, but while they all wondered about the things Jesus was doing, he said to the disciples:

44 Listen to me--the Son of Man will soon be delivered into the hands of men.

45 But they did not understand this, and were prevented from grasping Jesus' meaning, and were afraid to ask him what he meant.

46 After this, an argument arose amongst them as to whom was the most important disciple.

47 Realizing what they were thinking, Jesus took a small child and set him by his side.

48 He told them: Whoever receives a child as a follower of mine receives me; and whoever receives me,

because he followeth not with us.⁸

50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.⁹

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.¹⁰

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.¹¹

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

receives Him who sent me. And the one among you who thinks himself to be the least of all shall be the greatest.

49 John now answered, and said: Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we made him stop because he wasn't one of our group.

50 But Jesus replied: Don't stop him! Anyone who is not against us is for us!

51 Now it came to pass that when the time neared for Jesus to return to heaven, he resolutely determined to go on to Jerusalem.

52 He sent some messengers on ahead of him, and they entered into a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival.

53 But the people turned him away when they realized he was going on to Jerusalem.

54 When his disciples, James and John, saw this, they urged Jesus, saying: Lord--shall we call fire down from heaven to burn them up as Elijah did?

55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them, saying: [You have no idea what sort of demon you're listening to when you say things like that!]

56 The Son of Man didn't come to *take* men's lives, but to *save* men's lives! So they went on to another village.

57 As they continued down the road, a man came up, saying: Lord--I will follow you wherever you go!

58 Jesus replied: Foxes have dens, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. [Are you really sure you can pay the price of following me?]

59 Jesus told another: Follow me! But he said: Lord, please let me bury my father first.

60 Jesus replied: Let the dead bury their dead--you go proclaim the Kingdom of God!

61 Another said: Lord--I will come with you, but let me first go tell my family farewell.

62 But Jesus said: No man who starts to plow, but turns from what is ahead to look to what is behind, is worthy of the Kingdom of God!

1. A Jewish custom to show disgust, and to proclaim that the area is unclean.

2. A verse showing that Jesus' miracle ministry lasted a very short time since Herod confuses the two.

3. David Flusser points out that one of the oldest Uncial texts of Luke has Jesus blessing God and not the *food*, which is in keeping with the manner of the Jews. The Christian habit of saying a prayer over the food is probably a corruption of the original Jewish practices of the apostles.

4. A verse showing that truly following Christ requires one to lay down his own will for his life and to follow God's revealed will (in the Scriptures).

5. The word for "**decease**" is *exodus*, which means "**departure**," "**journey**," etc.

6. The rebuke is to the disciples, not the father.

7. This regular argument among the disciples is not wholly motivated by self-aggrandizement, for part of the culture required that there be certain mandated seating arrangements at given times depending on one's rank or age (such as at Passover where the youngest of a rabbi's disciples sits to the rabbi's right, where we see John is), and this probably plays a role in the argument. While the Talmud shows such concerns over rank were largely limited to the more important rabbis, the DSS reveal that the Essenes applied this to the laity, which Jesus' disciples may also be doing. However, it is still apparent that there was indeed a jostling for a superior rank amongst the group.

8. A humorous verse showing John trying to curry favor after being rebuked, only to be rebuked yet again.

9. A very important verse, together with its companion in Mark 9, contradicting the theology of many denominations that their group alone is accepted by God as the "true" church.

10. **Josephus on traveling through Samaria on the way to Jerusalem.**

It was the custom of the Galileans, when they came to the Holy City at the festivals, to take their journeys through the country of the Samaritans. On their route lay a village called Ginea, which was situated on the border between Samaria and the Great Plain, and at this time certain persons fought with the Galileans, and killed many of them. When the leaders of the Galileans were told what had been done they went to Cumanus (Procurator from 48-52 AD) and desired him to avenge the murders; but he was bribed by the Samaritans to do nothing. The Galileans, indignant at this, urged the Jewish populace to resort to arms and to regain their liberty, saying that while slavery was a bitter thing but that, when it was joined with direct injuries it was completely intolerable, and when their principal men endeavored to pacify them, they entreated the assistance of Eleazar son

of Dineus, a robber who had for many years made his home in the mountains, and with his assistance they set afire and plundered many villages of the Samaritans.

--Ant. 20.6.1 118

11. As mentioned in the Matthew commentary, the man's father may have already died, and he could be going through the year-long mourning process, which Jesus would be showing is pointless in contradiction to the notion of prayers for the dead easing the punishment in the afterlife for their sins.

LUKE CHAPTER 10

1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.
 2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest¹, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.
 3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.
 4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.
 5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.
 6 And if the son of peace² be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.
 7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.
 8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:
 9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.
 10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,
 11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.
 12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.
 13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.³
 14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.
 15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.
 16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.
 17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.
 18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.
 19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.
 20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.⁴
 21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced⁵ in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that

LUKE CHAPTER 10

1 After this, the Lord selected seventy other disciples to go in pairs to every city and place he later planned to visit.
 2 So he told them: The harvest is truly great, but there are few laborers to take it in. Pray that the Lord of the Harvest will send laborers to gather His harvest in.
 3 Go as I've sent you, but know that I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.
 4 Take neither purse, nor sack, nor sandals [--go with only the clothes on your back]. Speak to no one until you arrive at your destination.
 5 And in whatever house you enter, first say: "Peace be to this house."
 6 If a man of peace lives there, your peace will rest upon his house. If not, then your blessing shall return to you.
 7 Stay in only one house when you are in a city, and eat and drink whatever they offer you, for a workman has the right to expect his wages. Don't change residences.
 8 And in whatever city you happen to be in that they welcome you, eat what they offer you.
 9 Heal the sick in those cities, and proclaim: "The Kingdom of God has come near to you!"
 10 But if a city does not welcome you, go into the street and proclaim in everyone's hearing:
 11 "We shake off even the dust of your town that sticks to us as a sign [of what will happen to you]--but be certain that the Kingdom of God is near you just the same!"
 12 I tell you, Sodom will fare better on Judgment Day than *that* city will!
 13 Woe to you, Chorazin and Bethsaida! For if the great miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they long ago would have repented to a man, sitting in goatskin and ashes!
 14 Tyre and Sidon will get off easier at the Last Judgment than *you* will!
 15 And you, Capernaum--shall you be exalted up to heaven? No, you will be cast down to *Sheol* instead.
 16 He who hears you, hears me! And he who rejects you, rejects me--and he who rejects me, also rejects Him who sent me!
 17 In time, the seventy returned joyfully, saying: Lord--even the demons obey us when we use your name!
 18 Jesus answered: I beheld [the power and authority of] Satan broken with the speed of lightning [before he even knew what was happening]!
 19 Behold, I give you authority to trample upon snakes and scorpions; and I grant you authority over all the power of the enemy--and nothing will harm you in any way!
 20 But don't rejoice at the fact that demon spirits are subject to you; rejoice that your names are enrolled in heaven!

thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes, which see the things that ye see:

24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.⁶

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?⁷

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite⁸, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn⁹ and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

21 Then Jesus shouted in the joy of the Spirit, and said: I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You hid the secrets of the Kingdom from the learned, and revealed them instead to simple people, for it seemed good in Your sight to do that!

22 All things have been entrusted to me by my Father, yet no man truly knows the Son and what he is but the Father; and no one knows who and what the Father is but His Son, and he to whom the Son reveals Him.

23 Jesus turned to the disciples, and said privately to them: Blessed are your eyes, which are seeing these things!

24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings yearned to see and hear what you are beholding, and died without that honor.

25 Now a certain expert on Mosaic Law stood up and tried to entrap Jesus by asking: Master--what must I do to inherit eternal life?

26 Jesus replied: What's *your* understanding of what the Law says about that?

27 He answered: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and you must love your neighbor as yourself.

28 Jesus agreed, saying: You've answered correctly. If you really do that, you will have eternal life.

29 But the man, wanting to justify himself [and the fact that he didn't love everyone], responded: Who qualifies as my neighbor, though?

30 Jesus answered with a parable: A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and on the way he was accosted by bandits who beat him half to death, and left him naked by the side of the road.

31 A priest came along, but when he saw him crossed to the other side of the road and continued on his way.

32 Later, a Levite came along and did likewise [because, like the priest, he didn't want to be bothered].

33 But then a Samaritan on a journey came along, saw the man, and had compassion on him.

34 He went over and picked him up, washed and bound his wounds with oil and wine, and set the man on his donkey. Then he led him to an inn and took care of him.

35 The next day, when he was to depart, he paid two silver pennies to the innkeeper, telling him: "Take care of the man until he can travel, and I will reimburse you whatever it costs when I return this way."

36 Jesus now asked: Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man whom the bandits wounded?

37 The man said: The one who showed mercy to him.

Jesus added: Go have the same attitude, and be the same sort of man.

38 Now it came to pass that they entered the village of Bethany, and a woman named Martha invited Jesus [and the twelve] into her house.

39 This Martha had a sister named Mary who, with the disciples, sat in a group and learned from Jesus' teachings.

40 But Martha was flustered, busily trying to prepare dinner for them all by herself, so she came to Jesus, and said: Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to prepare the meal by myself? Please tell her to get up and help me!

41 But Jesus answered: Martha, Martha--you have too

42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

much on your mind.

42 The truth is, there is only one thing you should be concerned about, and Mary has found it. What she has found will not be lost merely to have dinner.

1. This may be a prayer to the Holy Spirit, rather than to the Father.

2. A Hebrew idiom meaning a person of peace.

3. An important verse showing that a prime purpose of miracles is not to bless people in a temporal sense, but to encourage repentance.

4. Jesus here is directing all attention back to God and showing that we must always keep our focus on God, lest the devil ultimately misdirect us even as we do the work of God.

5. The English doesn't come close to conveying the meaning of this strong word. Terms like "Jumped for joy," or "Gave a Pentecostal shout," are much closer to conveying Jesus' wild enthusiasm in comparison to the reverent, self-controlled view we usually have of Him.

6. If you contrast the words of the lawyer here (**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself**) with Jesus' words in Mark 12:30-31 (**And thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Though shalt love thy neighbor as thyself...**) and with Jesus' words in Matthew 7:12 (**Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets**) and then recall the story from the Talmud in which Hillel summarizes the Law: ("*What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah; all the rest of it is commentary; go and learn*"--Shabbat 31a, Jerusalem Talmud), it is clear this "**lawyer**" is a member of the school of Hillel, and is probably repeating either the actual words of Hillel in the incident with the Gentile, which the Jerusalem Talmud misquotes, or else he is repeating a more developed statement of Hillel's that the Talmud doesn't record. In any event, there is no "contradiction" between the Gospels as to where the statement comes from as some would claim.

7. Clearly, the lawyer's conscience was pricked, and he realized his love walk wasn't in keeping with the words he just spoke.

8. In this, one of the most famous of Jesus' parables, we have an interesting cast of characters. First, we have the "**lawyer**," meaning that he was an expert in the written and oral Torah, and probably a Pharisee from the school of Hillel since he seems to rattle off an answer that would accord with Hillel's teachings. As the parable progresses, a man is beaten unconscious by thieves. We see that both a priest and Levite ignore the man laying by the side of the road until a Samaritan comes to his aid. Interestingly, the priests (and many Levites) were known for rejecting the oral Torah in favor of the letter-of-the-Law, one point of which (Lev. 21:11) required them to avoid touching a dead body, lest they become ritually impure. From a distance, the hapless victim might well give the appearance of being a dead man, and thus the priest and Levite, in their zeal to legalistically obey the Torah, may not have even bothered to see if the man was still breathing, lest it turn out he was dead and they become impure. (The text also seems to leave the impression they didn't wish to be bothered with someone else's problem.) Finally, a Samaritan, considered by the Jews to be a heretic to start with (who likewise rejects the oral Torah) risks defilement by touching a possibly dead body to check the man--finds he is alive, and ministers to him. Jesus thus is rebuking legalism on all fronts: The priests (Sadducees) and Levites (for the fact that they might exalt obeying an extraneous law regarding ritual impurity above that of saving a human life); and some of Pharisees, who might conveniently do likewise even though their oral Torah itself would technically excuse such ritual defilement if done to save a life or to bury a dead body discovered on the road.

9. The proper word for an inn, *pandocheion*, is used here in contrast to the word *katalyma* used in connection with Joseph and Mary's finding no room for them at the "**inn**." In fact, the word there means "living space" or "guest chamber," and probably referred to the tabernacle built by friends or family for the Festival of *Sukkot*.

LUKE CHAPTER 11

1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.¹

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his

LUKE CHAPTER 11

1 Some time after this, Jesus was praying at a certain place. When he finished, one of the disciples asked: Lord, teach us to pray, just as John used to teach *his* disciples.

2 And he answered: When you pray, say: *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*

3 *Give us day by day our daily bread.*

4 *And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*

5 Jesus added: With respect to prayer, say one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight, saying, "My friend--lend me three loaves of bread,

6 "For an acquaintance of mine has suddenly paid me a visit on his travels, and I have nothing to give him!"

7 Your friend may well call out from within, "Don't bother me--the door is locked, and we're all in bed! I can't get up and help you!"

8 But if you persist in knocking, even if he won't help you out of friendship, I tell you he'll rise up and give you as many loaves as you need because of your persistence.

9 So I say to you: Ask God, and it will be given to you.

importunity² he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.
 9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?
 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?
 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?³
 14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.
 15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.
 16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.
 17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.
 18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.
 19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?⁴ therefore shall they be your judges.
 20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.
 21 When a strong man⁵ armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:
 22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.
 23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.
 24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.
 25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.
 26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself⁶; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.
 27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.
 28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.
 29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign

Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you.
 10 For everyone who asks shall receive, and anyone who seeks will find, and he who knocks will have the door opened.
 11 If a son comes to any of you men who are fathers and asks for some bread, do you give him a rock? Or if he begs for a broiled fish, do you hand him a snake?
 12 Or if he wants an egg, do you offer him a scorpion?
 13 [Of course not!] So if you earthly fathers, who are evil in comparison to your Father in heaven, give good gifts to your own children, how much more will your heavenly Father will give the *Holy Spirit* to those who ask Him?
 14 Later, Jesus was casting out a demon that caused a man to be mute. When the demon left, the man could speak once more, and the people were amazed.
 15 But some said: He's casting out demons by the authority of Beelzebub, the chief of demons!
 16 Others, challenging him, demanded he produce a sign from heaven [to prove he was of God].
 17 But he knew their thoughts, and said to them: Every kingdom in civil war is brought to desolation; and every house divided against itself shall not stand.
 18 If Satan is at war with his own forces, how can his kingdom possibly survive? That must be the case because you claim I am casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub!
 19 And if *my* power comes from Beelzebub, what power do *you* have to cast them out? [None!] So between the two of us, these fleeing demons are passing judgment on *you*, not me!
 20 But if *I* am doing this by the [power] of *God*, then no doubt the *Kingdom* of God must be in front of your very eyes!
 21 For when an armed warlord oversees his stronghold, all his booty is safe.
 22 But when a hero stronger than the warlord bests him and ties him up helpless, the hero takes the armor the warlord trusted would protect him, and then picks through the warlord's treasure with impunity.
 23 You are either for me or against me! If you don't help me gather in the harvest, then you are trying to scatter the harvest into the wind to be lost.
 24 When a demon is cast out of a man, he wanders the deserts seeking a place of rest, but finding none, he says to himself, "I'll go back to the one I was cast out of!"
 25 So he returns and finds the man he once possessed [cleansed from his presence].
 26 Then the demon goes out and finds seven others more evil than he is to come possess the man and make him worse off than he ever was before!
 27 While he was speaking these things, a woman in the crowd shouted out: Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you!
 28 Jesus answered: Yes—but more blessed are those who hear the Message of God, and keep it!
 29 When there was a huge crowd, Jesus told them: This is an evil generation who always seek a sign. The only sign they will get is the sign of Jonah the prophet!
 30 For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites [that they must repent or perish], so is the Son of Man a sign to this generation!
 31 The Queen of Sheba [--a Gentile--] will rise in

be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single⁷, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil⁸, thy body also is full of darkness.

35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed⁹ before dinner.

39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.¹⁰

40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?

41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have;¹¹ and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs¹², and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

43 Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.¹³

45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.¹⁴

46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will

resurrection, and at the Last Judgment denounce the men of this generation, for she came all the way from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and a greater than Solomon is here before you!

32 The [Gentile] men of Nineveh will arise in resurrection, and at the Last Judgment will denounce this generation, for *they* repented at the preaching of Jonah; and a greater than Jonah is here before you!

33 No man who has lit a candle hides it in a closet or under a basket—he puts it in a candlestick so everyone who comes in can see by its light.

34 Now the light to the body is the eye. [When you see and operate through eyes of unselfishness and compassion, the whole body has light to see clearly by. But when you see through eyes of greed and selfishness, the whole body walks in darkness and deception.]

35 Watch out that the light in you is not actually the darkness of deception!

36 So if your whole body is full of light, with no darkness, then you will be filled with [enlightenment] as if a candle were lighting your way.

37 As Jesus spoke, a [Shammaiite] Pharisee asked him to come have dinner in his house. Jesus agreed, and reclined to eat in his house.

38 But Jesus did not perform the usual ceremonial hand-washing before reaching for food, and the Pharisee couldn't believe it.

39 The Lord realized this, and said: You Pharisees are good at cleaning the outside of things, but your inside is full of barbarism and wickedness.

40 You fools! Did not He who made the outside make the inside too? [So cleanse the inside as well!]

41 For instance, give alms out of the compassion that should live *in* you, and not out of commandment, and you will be clean inside and out, and everything will be clean *to* you!

42 But woe to you Pharisees, for you tithe to the last kernel of grain, while totally missing the “law” of justice and God's love! You should have learned to do all with equal zeal [and then your tithes would be pure offerings]!

43 Woe to you Pharisees, for you love the best seats in the synagogue, and crave being greeted with honor in the marketplace!

44 Woe to you hypocrite Torah teachers and Pharisees!

You are like graves covered over by grass—you defile people coming into contact with you without their even knowing it!

45 Then answered one of the Torah teachers: Teacher, in speaking as you do [against the Pharisees], you also insult us.

45 [*Alternate reading*]: Then answered one of the [Hillelite] Torah teachers: Teacher, in speaking as you do [against the Shammaiites], you also insult us.

46 Jesus answered: Then woe to you Torah teachers as well! For you fail to stand against the crushing load of legalism around you, and do nothing to lift it off the backs of the people!

47 Woe to all of you! For you erect monuments to the prophets your fathers killed!

48 Yet your own deeds show you agree with everything they did! They kill, while you build the tombs of their victims—but you're both the same!

49 God, in His wisdom, warned you and prophesied: *I will*

send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:¹⁵
 50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;
 51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias¹⁶, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.
 52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge¹⁷: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.
 53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:
 54 Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.
 50 [Now the full fruition of that prophecy is at hand!] The blood of all the prophets ever slain will now fall on this generation of people:
 51 From the blood of Abel [in the first scroll of the Scriptures], to Zechariah ben Berechiah [in the last scroll of the Scriptures] who was slain between the altar and the Temple—I tell you, all their blood shall be on your heads!
 52 Woe to you expositors of the Torah! [You usurped the Scriptures to your own perverted interpretations, then tried to keep others from entering into the truth where you, yourselves, would not go!]
 53 As Jesus was saying these things, the outraged religious leaders all started shouting questions, trying to get him to take their bait,
 54 And say something they could use against him.

1. In contrast to the Protestant rejection of codified prayer as “vain repetition,” the *Didache* instructs the early church to say this prayer thrice daily.
2. “**Importunity**” should be understood as being irritatingly persistent.
3. By “**giving the Holy Spirit**,” Jesus is not making a reference to Tongues and so-called Gifts of the Spirit, but He is speaking of the empowering and inspiration of the Spirit to live a life pleasing to God.
4. An interesting verse that can be understood in two ways: Either Jesus is mocking them for the fact that, while they claim to have divine authority, they clearly have no power over demons (Acts 19), which should follow such authority; or He is affirming that, while they have a limited ability to deal with demons (the DSS record at least one exorcism ceremony), in fact they are doing so under the power of the devil without realizing it. Certainly, we can see instances today of occultists or pagans trafficking with spirits and appearing to exorcise them from people or areas, but typically such exorcisms are short-lived and ultimately leave those who sought help from them in a worse position. This is especially evident in some of the supernatural-based TV shows that bring in a psychic to “cleanse” a so-called haunted house. Once the psychic speaks to the spirit and convinces it to move on, you’ll note that often the show does a follow-up where the house is now twice as haunted as before! The usual position of the psychic after this is that the original spirit was somehow keeping in check other hostile entities, and that now that it’s moved on into the Light the remaining entities are free to pester the owners of the house. Actually, it is nothing more than a demonic sham in which the psychic was tricked by deceiving spirits; or else one group of demons has been replaced with another group, for Jesus in verse 18, in a roundabout way, does reveal that Satan’s kingdom *is* divided against itself and *will not* stand! We see clear evidence in history of the fact that the demonic principalities are in constant struggle against each other for superior position even if they do not rebel against Satan directly. For instance, demon-possessed Josef Stalin and demon-possessed Adolf Hitler didn’t work together to advance the devil’s power over the earth—they fought each other for total control! This is illustrative of the devil’s personality quirk: Self-aggrandizement. The demonic principalities in control over nations (Dan. 10) work together in common cause only to the degree that they must, and always with a desire to obtain advantage.
5. The “**strong man**” is the devil himself.
6. Probably meaning enough demonic power to completely bring the person back under complete spiritual bondage. As noted elsewhere, Jesus’ point is also difficult to understand.
7. Meaning if a person is unselfish.
8. Meaning if a person is greedy and selfish.

Preface to verses 37-54. This is an extremely interesting event, showing Jesus’ absolute disgust with the extraneous religious laws of Shammai. The event starts with a Shammaite Pharisee inviting Jesus to dinner and then expressing criticism that Jesus does not ceremonially wash His hands before drinking. Jesus then rebukes the Pharisee over the movement’s abysmal failure at bringing the light and love of God to the world, substituting hosts of religious commandments for love and compassion, and excluding all those who failed to follow those commandments with sufficient zeal. Eventually, a “**lawyer**” joins the conversation, respectfully pointing out to Jesus that in criticizing the “**Pharisee**,” He is insulting his particular group as well. When the man is called a “**lawyer**,” that means that he is a recognized teacher and expositor of the Torah. Some of the language may indicate the lawyer was a Hillelite, in which case we see Jesus, possibly fed up with both groups, unleash an unusually harsh rebuke when the lawyer speaks up for the Shammaite. The dinner goes downhill from there, resulting in the religious leaders turning against Him and seeking to trap Him in His own words.

As a final note of interest, Jesus seems to confirm the premise that the face of Phariseism at this point in time is not that of the Hillelites, who eventually take over Judaism, but that of Shammai and his followers. We see this in verses 39 and 42, where Jesus uses the broad-brush term “**you Pharisees**,” for in both cases the criticisms He delivers are direct references to religious laws of Shammai that the school of Hillel differed with.

9. Showing he was surprised that Jesus did not ceremonially dip his hands into water in accordance with Shammai’s 18 edicts, which had become a Pharisee custom.
10. We can absolutely know this is a Shammaite Pharisee by Jesus’ words, and the preceding verses about “**washing**.” The Shammaites believed that one should ceremonially wash before picking up the traditional cup of wine, lest the cup become defiled, whereas the Hillelites put off the washing until later in the meal, ruling that to drink from an unclean cup was permissible. In typical

fashion when dealing with Shammaiites, Jesus lashes out with a blistering attack.

11. “**Give alms of such things as ye have**” may be better paraphrased as: “*Give alms out of compassion.*” Almsgiving was commanded in the Torah, and many of the Pharisees seem to have given to the poor out of constraint, while inwardly holding the attitude that they were largely in that state because of their failure to live righteously. There was also a (partially correct) belief that almsgiving was accepted by God as an atonement for sin under the Law, and part of the hypocrisy Jesus (and the Talmud) rebukes the Pharisees for is for willfully committing sin and then giving alms or doing a good deed to atone for it. A modern example of this can be found in Al Capone, who went to Confession on the weekend to be absolved from his sins of the prior week knowing he would commit the same sins again during the new week.

12. Seed-bearing herbs the Shammaiites tithed.

13. Jesus is referring here to the fact that someone who walks over a grave without realizing it becomes defiled even though he is unaware of the defilement. Likewise, those who follow the philosophies of the Pharisees (more specifically, Shammai) are themselves defiled by legalism.

14. A very interesting portion of Scripture. As noted, a Hillelite Torah teacher present at the table may have joined the conversation.

If he is from the school of Hillel, the following paraphrase may convey what was happening:

Woe unto you Shammaite hypocrites! For you are like a hidden grave that defiles those who come in contact with it without their even realizing it!

Then answered one of the Torah teachers from the school of Hillel: Master, in insulting the followers of Shammai, you insult us from the school of Hillel also, for while we have our disagreements, we are all ultimately Pharisees.

Jesus answered: Then woe to you Hillelites as well, for you fail to stand against the legalism around you, and do nothing to lift it off the backs of the people!

15. This may be a prophecy from a lost book of the Bible, or else one of the Aramaic *Targums*. It is not in regular Scripture.

16. Not necessarily referring to Zechariah the prophet, but possibly to Zechariah ben Berechiah, who was murdered on the Temple grounds by Zealot supporters of Shammai; or to Zechariah, son of *Jehoiada* (2 Chronicles 24) who was killed at the Temple. Some believe that Zechariah ben Jehoiada was known in Jesus’ time as Zechariah ben Berechiah in the *Targums*. Thus, Jesus would be referring to the murder first recorded in first book of the Bible, and the last, which in the Jewish canon of Scripture is the book of Chronicles. He would also, in a roundabout way, be establishing the Old Testament canon of Scripture, excluding the apocrypha.

17. The “**key of knowledge**” the Pharisees and Torah teachers had taken away was the Scriptural understanding that God saves man out of His love and mercy, and not as obligation or reward for righteous living. It should be noted that many in Judaism of today recognize this precept.

LUKE CHAPTER 12

1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.¹

2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

3 Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell²; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:

9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

LUKE CHAPTER 12

1 Meanwhile, when an enormous crowd so thick that they were piling atop one another had gathered, Jesus began to speak first to the disciples. He told them:

Beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 For in the end, there is nothing covered that shall not be uncovered for all to see, neither will there be anything hidden that will remain a secret.

3 So whatever you have spoken in darkness will be heard in the light; and the things you whispered in secret will be shouted from the housetops for all to hear.

4 And I tell you, my friends, don’t fear men who can only take your physical life and then can do no more.

5 I’ll tell you whom you should fear: Fear God, who—after He has slain the body—can cast you into hell! Yes, fear *Him*!

6 Aren’t five sparrows sold for a couple of copper pieces, yet God has His eye on every one of them?

7 God even knows the exact number of hairs on your head, and that’s how much He cares about *you*! So don’t fear, because you are worth more than many sparrows to Him.

8 I also tell you that whoever shall acknowledge me before men, him shall the Son of Man acknowledge before the angels of God.

9 But he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

10 And whoever slanders the Son of Man can be forgiven, but whoever slanders the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you into the synagogues to accuse you, or hand you over to magistrates or sovereigns, don’t plan beforehand what you will say to defend yourself.

12 For the Holy Spirit will show you what to say in the

12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.³

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.⁴

22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms⁵; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.⁶

35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when

same hour you need it.

13 Someone in the crowd said: Master--tell my brother to give me my share of our family inheritance!

14 Jesus replied: Sir--who made me a judge or arbiter over you and your brother?

15 Jesus then spoke up for all to hear: Take care that you avoid greed, for what counts in life is not how many material possessions you have!

16 Then Jesus spoke a parable: A rich man once took in a great harvest from his fields.

17 And he thought to himself, *What shall I do? I have so much abundance that I can't store it all!*

18 *I know--I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then all my grain and goods will be safe in storage.*

19 *Then I will be able to say to myself, "You have enough stored to last you many years, so relax. Eat, drink, and be merry!"*

20 But God heard this, and said to him: "You fool--this night you will die, and then who will make use of what you stored up for yourself?"

21 Jesus concluded: That's typical of the fate of a man who works for his own earthly profit instead of working for God [and storing up treasure in heaven]!

22 And he told the disciples: This is why I tell you to take no thought for your earthly life, or what you'll eat, or your body and what clothes you'll wear.

23 Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

24 Take the ravens: They don't sow or reap. They have no granaries or barns, yet God feeds them every day. How much more important are you than mere birds in God's eyes?

25 And which of you, by worrying, can add even one hour to his life?

26 If you can't do a simple thing like that, why are you so worried about the future? [The future is in God's hands.]

27 Consider the lilies and how they grow in the fields: They don't work, they don't spin cloth--yet I tell you that Solomon's clothing, in all its splendor, wasn't as beautiful as *their* coverings!

28 If God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is used for kindling, how much more will he clothe *you*, you doubting men of little faith?!

29 So don't spend all your time focusing on what you'll eat and drink--and don't let your mind cause you to worry about it.

30 That's what the Gentile nations [which have no hope] do. But you have a Father who knows and cares about your needs.

31 So make the Kingdom of God your primary concern, and all you need will be added to you.

32 Don't be afraid, my little flock--it is your Father's delight to give you the Kingdom.

33 Sell what you have and give to the needy, thus storing your earthly treasure not in a pouch that can wear out, but in a *heavenly* place where it will be safe from loss, where no thief can get to it, and it does not get eaten by moths.

34 For where your treasure is, your heart will be too.

35 Be like vigilant servants who are dressed and have

he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.⁷

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?

50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:⁸

52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what

lanterns lit,

36 Ready for their master's return from the wedding, so when he arrives and knocks on the door they can open for him immediately [and show him they are fully prepared].

37 Blessed are those servants whom their master finds on watch. I tell you their master will put on an apron, seat his servants, and serve *them* dinner!

38 Even if he comes at midnight, or before dawn, blessed are the servants he finds waiting in preparation for him!

39 Remember this: If the owner of a house had known what time a thief was coming, he would have stayed up and kept watch for him so his house wasn't burgled.

40 Likewise, you keep on your toes, for the Son of Man will come at an hour when *you're* not expecting him.

41 Peter asked: Lord--is this warning for us, or for everyone?

42 The Lord answered: Who then is the faithful and wise sort of servant whom his lord can trust with the authority to feed the underlings of his household?

43 Blessed is the servant whom his lord finds doing that upon his arrival.

44 I tell you truly, the master of that servant will make him ruler over all that he has!

45 But if that servant thinks in his heart, "My master is delaying his return," then mistreats the men and women under him, and goes out and gets drunk--

46 The lord of that servant will return on a day when the servant isn't looking for him, and at an hour the servant doesn't expect, and his fate will be to be quartered, and punished with the unbelievers!

47 That servant, who knew what his lord's will was and ignored it, shall be punished greatly.

48 But the servant who didn't know, and yet did things worthy of punishment, will have a light punishment. Because one who is given a lot, has a lot required of him. And he who has been entrusted with much is expected to do much.

49 I have come to set the world afire, and how I wish that fire were already kindled!

50 But I have a baptism yet to undergo, and I must bear its burden until all is completed.

51 Did you think I had come to bring peace to the earth? [No, not yet!] I have come to bring division, not unity.

52 From now on, there will be a household of five--and three will be divided against two, and two against three.

53 *The father shall be at odds with the son, and the son against the father. The mother will be against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. The mother-in law--will be against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law.*

54 And Jesus said to the crowd: When you see a cloud coming from the west, you immediately know, and say, "Rain is coming!" And it does.

55 When a wind blows in from the south, you say, "It's going to get hot!" And it does.

56 You hypocrites! You can read the signs in nature, but why can't you perceive the signs of the times you're in?

57 Why can't you even judge right from wrong among your own selves?

is right?

58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.⁹

58 If someone sues you and you're both on your way to court--settle with him before the judge intervenes, because if you're in the wrong, the judge may hand you over to the jailer, and he will cast you into Debtor's Prison!

59 I tell you that once you find yourself there, you won't get out of prison until you find a way to pay off every cent of what you owe. [And how could you do that from behind bars?]

1. The accusation of "**hypocrisy**" largely refers to the fact that the Pharisees' obedience was done with an incorrect attitude, although there were indeed those who did perform their acts of piety or charity in order to look good to their fellows. Recall the Talmud likewise criticizes hypocrites within the Pharisee movement.

2. "**Hell**" here is not the word for death and the grave (*Sheol*), but that of *Gehenna*, the Greek form of the words for the garbage dump near Jerusalem in which fires were perpetually burning. This is a strong indictment against those who deny eternal punishment, and view hell as a place that merely destroys the soul.

Jewish legend claimed there were five different sorts of fire in hell--one that devoured and absorbs; one that devoured while not absorbing (probably the sort Jesus warns about); one that absorbed but did not devour; one that neither devoured nor absorbed; and a fire that devoured fire.

3. Apparently, this man comes to Jesus to arbitrate a dispute in the manner Moses did when he led the Israelites. Jesus quickly rebukes him for being earthly-minded when he should be focused on the things of God.

4. Jesus' point in all this is that we should focus on putting our earthly resources to best work in the Kingdom instead of hoarding them to make *this* life more comfortable, for it is only the treasures we lay up in heaven by working for God in this life that shall follow us.

5. This is not a command to enter poverty, but an exhortation to understand that the fullness of life--here and in the hereafter--consists of devoting oneself to God and His work.

6. An indictment against all of us who, on a daily basis, worry more about paying the bills than what we should do for the Kingdom.

7. These verses about "**stripes**" are difficult-to-understand clearly. We can certainly accept that God holds those who are knowledgeable in spiritual matters to a higher standard than those who are not. Beyond that, we can debate the other ramifications of the teaching. While some Catholics use these verses to back up the idea of Purgatory, the context of Christ's words show He is not talking about a period of punishment/purification after death, but that He is speaking of judgment at the time of His Coming. The text also seems to be referring to teachers or those in positions of authority mistreating those under them as warranting the severe beating He speaks of. It would not be wholly impossible for Jesus' phraseology of "**many stripes**" to be a euphemism of "going to hell," while "**few stripes**" could actually be a euphemism for "going to heaven, but losing reward."

8. By "**bringing division**," Jesus means that not all will accept Him, and that very fact will break Judaism into two factions: those who accept Christ as Messiah, and those who will reject Him.

9. One of Jesus' more confusing parables. The point ultimately is to warn the religious leaders that if they reject Him, they will suffer for their sins in hell until they have "**paid the last mite**"--another way of saying they will be eternally lost, because the man in Debtor's Prison never got out until he found some way to pay off his debt from behind bars, which was, of course, impossible.

LUKE CHAPTER 13

1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.¹

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?²

3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.³

6 He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.⁴

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on

LUKE CHAPTER 13

1 Around that time, some there told Jesus about a group of Galilean Jews whom Pilate had slain as they made sacrificial offerings.

2 Jesus' response was: Do you think these men suffered such because they were worse sinners than any other Galileans?

3 No! But I tell you that if you all do not repent, your end will be just as bad.

4 Or how about the eighteen Jews who were killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed? Do you think they were worse sinners than any other men in Jerusalem?

5 In both cases, no. [Bad things happen to even the best people!] But I tell you that if you all do not repent, you will perish in like manner.

6 Jesus then spoke a parable: A man had a fig tree in his orchard, and he came looking for fruit but never found any.

7 So he told his overseer: For three years, I've been looking for this fig tree to bear some fruit, and there is none. Why let it take up space in my orchard anymore? Cut it down [and plant a new tree]!

8 The overseer answered: Lord, give it one more year. I'll dig a watering trench around it, and fertilize it.

9 And if it bears fruit next season, fine. If not, then you can cut it down [and be rid of it in favor of a new

the sabbath.

11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.⁵

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?⁶

16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?

19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?

21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.⁷

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.⁸

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.⁹

31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.¹⁰

32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox¹¹,

seedling that will bear the fruit you want].

10 During a Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues.

11 At the back of the synagogue was a hunchbacked woman who could not straighten up. She had been in that state for eighteen years because of a demon that caused the condition.

12 When Jesus caught sight of her, he called her over to him, and said: Woman—you are freed from your infirmity!

13 Then he laid hands on her, and instantly she stood up and praised God.

14 However, the chief rabbi of the synagogue was offended that Jesus had healed non-life-threatening disease on the day of Rest, and he grumbled to the assembly: There are six days a man is allowed to work—come be healed on those days, and not on the Sabbath when God commands rest!

15 But the Lord answered: You hypocrite! Doesn't each one of you lead your animals out from the stall to be watered on the Sabbath when, by your own words, you're commanded to rest?

16 Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, be freed from bondage on the Sabbath day?

17 When Jesus said this, his opponents were put to shame, and the people rejoiced for the miracles he did.

18 Then Jesus said: What does the Kingdom of God resemble? What can I liken it to?

19 It's like a grain of mustard seed that a man cast into his garden. That small seed grew into a large tree, and the birds of the air made their nests in it.

20 And he repeated: To what shall I liken the Kingdom of God?

21 It's like a pinch of yeast that a woman kneaded into three cups of flour until the whole dough was completely leavened [and then overflowed the bowl]!

22 And Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching and making his way toward Jerusalem.

23 Someone asked: Lord—are there only a few who are saved? And Jesus answered:

24 Endeavor to enter in at the narrow gate—for I tell you that many will want to enter in, but shall not be able.

25 When the master of the house decides the time has come and rises up to bar the door closed, people will stand outside knocking and calling out, "Lord! Lord! Open up for us!" But he will answer, "I don't know where you come from!"

26 Then you'll try to say, "But we ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets!"

27 But he will say, "I tell you, I don't know where you come from! Leave me, all you workers of iniquity!"

28 Yes, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with the prophets, enjoying the Kingdom of God while you, yourselves, are cast out of it!

29 [Gentiles] from the four corners of the earth outside of Israel will sit down in the Kingdom of God too!

30 And there are some [Gentiles] who were last that shall be made first, and there are some [Jews] who were first, that will be made last.

31 That same day, some Pharisees came, and warned Jesus: You better leave the area fast, for Herod Antipas

Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.
 33 Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.
 34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!
 35 Behold, your house¹² is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

wants to kill you!
 32 But he told them: Go tell that "Fox" I plan to cast out demons and heal for the next two days, and on the third day what I have come to do will be complete!
 33 Nevertheless, I must continue on the journey today and tomorrow and the next day, for it will not do for a prophet to die outside of Jerusalem.
 34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets, and stones those whom God sends to you! How often would I have gathered your people as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you refused!
 35 Look, for now your Temple will be left in desolation, and I assure you, you will not see me again until the day comes that you [and your leaders say of me], "Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord!"

1. No historical record exists of this incident outside the Bible. "**Mingled with their sacrifices**" means that they were slain in the act of making some sort of religious sacrifice, or performing some sort of sacrificial act.
2. Jesus here is coming against a common belief, then and now, that if a man is righteous, then God will keep him from harm.
3. The point about repentance is to say that unless the people repent by turning to Christ, they will all ultimately perish.
4. A parable about the failure of Pharisaic Judaism to answer the call of God and properly bring the knowledge of God to the Gentiles, and its failure by the elders to embrace the Messiah. Jesus here is saying that God will now cut down the system corrupted by the elders of Israel, which indeed occurs with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
5. In contrast to the teaching of some, there is no indication the woman here had received her affliction through sin.
6. Jesus here is acting under Hillel's concept of *Kol V'Khomer*, an argument based on weight. Some commandments and theological concepts are of greater weight than others (Matt. 23:23), and Jesus is pointing out the hypocrisy of rabbinic approval to water or feed dumb animals while denying healing to a human being on the Sabbath.
7. A sobering warning that many sincere people will wish to enter into eternal life but will fail simply because they reject Christ, the only way to the Father.
8. A verse that, in a roundabout way, deals with the Trinity. Those "**without**," were worshippers of God who denied the Son, but in the end realize they have been wrong, and now seek entrance. Instead, God the Son—on the other side of the door in His full authority as the Judge of mankind—responds that He doesn't know them, and it is now too late. Jesus then goes on to warn that the people of God who preceded this generation will enter into life, yet those today who reject the fulfillment of what their predecessors awaited will be cast out because of that rejection.
9. The "**last being first**" refers to the Gentiles, who will be the first to embrace the Messiah when they hear the Good News, while the leaders of the Chosen People of Israel will reject that Messiah until the end of the Age.
10. Probably friendly Hillelite Pharisees.
11. What Jesus means by "**fox**" is unclear. He may be mocking Herod as a half-breed Idumean Jew; or He could be playing upon a proverb about a "fox" that, though it is in its time of prosperity, is unworthy to be shown any deference or respect.
12. The "**house**" is the Temple. *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* (*Baruch habah Hashem Adonai*) is a Messianic prayer said by the Jews during Passover. In this incident, Jesus has declared that Israel will never see its Messiah come until the Jews of Jerusalem pray that prayer, specifically acknowledging that He is the Messiah that it refers to.

LUKE CHAPTER 14

1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees¹ to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.
 2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.
 3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?
 4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;
 5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?
 6 And they could not answer him again to these things.
 7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms²; saying unto them,
 8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;
 9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take

LUKE CHAPTER 14

1 It came to pass one Sabbath day that Jesus went into the house of a chief Pharisee to eat an uncooked meal, and they watched him.
 2 Now a man was present who was stricken with swollen limbs.
 3 Jesus asked the experts on the Law, along with the Pharisees: Does the Torah allow healing on the Sabbath day?
 4 But they were silent. So he took the man, healed him, and released him.
 5 Then he spoke to the people there, saying: Which of you who has a donkey or ox wouldn't think twice about pulling it out if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath?
 6 And they had no answer to that point.
 7 He then spoke a parable about those invited there, whom he observed sought the best seats at the table:
 8 When any man invites you to a wedding banquet, don't sit in the seat nearest the host, lest he call for someone he esteems more than you,
 9 And you face the man who invited you both bringing him up, telling you: "Please let this man have your seat." Then you, embarrassed, will have to take a seat

the lowest room.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.³

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

26 If any man come to me, and hate⁴ not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether his

at the bottom of the table, furthest from the host.

10 When you're invited, go sit in the worst seat, and then he who invited you will come and say, "Friend, come sit up here!" Then you will be honored in front of the other dinner guests.

11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, but he who *humbles* himself will be exalted.

12 Then Jesus told the man who had invited *him* there: When you have a banquet, don't call your friends, or family, or your rich neighbors--anyone who can possibly return the favor.

13 Instead, when you host a banquet, invite the poor, the maimed, the crippled, and the blind,

14 And you will be blessed by God--for they cannot return the favor--and at the resurrection of the just you will be rewarded.

15 When one of those eating at the table heard these things, he exclaimed to him: Blessed is he who eats bread in the Kingdom of God!

16 Then Jesus said in response to him: A man once held a great banquet, and invited many guests.

17 When it was ready, he sent out his servant to those who were invited, saying, "Come--everything is ready!"

18 But they all began to make excuses not to come. The first said, "I just bought some property and must go see it. Please excuse my absence."

19 Another said, "I just bought five yoke of oxen and need to test them out. Please excuse my absence."

20 A third said, "I am on my honeymoon, and can't attend."

21 So the servant returned, and told these things to his master. The master of the estate was furious at this, and told the servant, "Go out into the streets and alleys of the city and invite everyone you see: the homeless, the crippled, the lame, and the blind--invite them all here to feast!"

22 The servant did this and reported to his master, "Lord, it is done as you ordered, but there are still empty seats."

23 So the master told the servant, "Go out of town, and compel anyone you come across in the fields or on the roads to come--I will have my house filled!"

24 "I tell you that none of those who were invited shall even taste my banquet!"

25 There was a great crowd with Jesus, and he turned to them, saying:

26 If any man comes to me and doesn't hate by comparison his parents, wife, children, brothers and sisters--and yes, even his own life as well--he cannot be my disciple!

27 Whoever does not pick up his cross and follow me to the end, cannot be my disciple.

28 What man of you, if he sets out to construct a tower, doesn't first sit down and figure the cost to see if he can afford it?

29 If he doesn't, he may run short of funds after laying out the foundation. Then he'll have to stop construction, and everyone who sees it will laugh at his folly,

30 Saying, "This man started to build, but couldn't afford to finish what he started!"

31 Or what king going to war with another king doesn't first sit down with his officers and reckon whether his

be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?
 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.
 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath⁵, he cannot be my disciple.
 34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?
 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

ten thousand troops can defeat the twenty thousand troops of his enemy?
 32 And if he can't, he sends ambassadors to try to broker a peace agreement while his enemy is still a long way off.
 33 Likewise, any of you who does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.
 34 Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?
 35 It is unfit for either soil or fertilizer, and men simply throw it away! He who can understand--let him understand!

1. It is regrettable that the Pharisee is unnamed, and that we do not know which school of thought he was from. The lack of vehement hostility toward Jesus suggests this may have been a Hillelite household.
2. A bad translation better understood as: **'The best seats at the table.'**
3. The purpose of the parable is to comment upon how, by rejecting the messenger of the Lord of the Feast, those for whom the feast was prepared prove themselves unworthy. The word *compel* in verse 23 has long been misused to justify forced conversion of non-Christians to the faith. In fact, the proper use of the word here would be understood as imploring anyone who will hear to join the feast, not to force them into it.
4. **"Hate"** is likewise often misunderstood, and in context means to love Christ so much that even one's appropriate love for family and friends should seem to be hatred by comparison to the *agape* love of the believer toward his Lord.
5. Again, Jesus is saying that we should always have our eyes on Him, rather than upon our material lives and possessions.

LUKE CHAPTER 15

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.¹
 2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.
 3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,
 4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?
 5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.
 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.
 7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.²
 8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?³
 9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.
 10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.
 11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:
 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.
 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.
 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.
 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.
 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the

LUKE CHAPTER 15

1 Then the tax collectors and sinners came near to hear Jesus.
 2 But the Pharisees and the Torah teachers were offended, and murmured: This man welcomes sinners, and dines with them!
 3 So Jesus spoke a parable to them, saying:
 4 Which of you, if you have a hundred sheep, won't drop everything and leave the flock of ninety-nine in the wilderness to search until you find a single lost sheep?
 5 Then, after you've rescued it, you carry the sheep home on your shoulders, rejoicing.
 6 And when you return home, you summon your friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!"
 7 I tell you that heaven likewise rejoices more over one lost sinner that repents than it does over ninety-nine just people who have no need of repentance.
 8 Or, say a woman loses one of ten silver coins [from her wedding adornment]. Doesn't she light a candle and tear the house apart until she finds it [because it is precious to her]?
 9 And when she does, she calls her friends and neighbors to her, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I found my lost coin!"
 10 Likewise, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.
 11 Jesus then said: A certain man had two sons.
 12 And the younger said to his father, "Father, I don't want to wait until you die to get my inheritance--give it to me now!" So the father divided up the estate.
 13 Soon afterward, the son converted it all to cash and left for a distant country where he squandered it all on partying.
 14 When the money was gone, a famine happened to strike, and he started to go hungry.
 15 So the young man sought work with a man of that country, but the only job he could find was to slop hogs [for a roof over his head].
 16 He would have loved to eat some of the [sour] carob pods fed to the hogs, but he wasn't permitted to, and no

husks⁴ that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants,⁵ and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

one gave him anything else.

17 When he came to his senses, he said to himself, "Even my father's hired hands have more than enough to eat--and here I am, starving to death!

18 "I will humble myself, return to my father, and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both [God] and you,

19 "'And am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired hands.'"

20 So he arose and returned to his father. But while he was still a long way off from home, his father [--who had been waiting all this time for him--] had compassion on him, and actually ran to meet *him*, embracing and kissing the boy.

21 The son began his prepared speech, saying, "Father, I have sinned against [God] and you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son--"

22 But his father said to his servants: "Bring out my best robe and put it on him--and give him a [signet] ring, and shoes for his feet!

23 "Also, bring the fatted calf, and slaughter it for a banquet. Let us eat, and rejoice!

24 "For this son of mine who was dead has returned to life. He was lost, but now he's found!" So they began to throw a great party.

25 Now the older son was out working in the field, and as he was returning to the house he heard the sound of music and merriment.

26 So he called one of the village children, and asked what was going on.

27 He was told: "Your brother has come home, and your father has killed the wheat-fed calf to celebrate his safe return back to him."

28 He was angry at hearing that so he stayed outside, and sulked. His father then came out and urged him to come in to the banquet.

29 But he answered his father: "I have faithfully served you for all my life, and at no time have I ever disrespected you or your commands to me, but you've never so much as given me a goat to barbecue up for my friends!

30 "Yet as soon as this son of yours comes crawling back home after squandering a third of your estate on prostitutes, you serve him up the fatted calf [reserved for esteemed guests, and throw a party in his honor]!"

31 So the father said: "My boy, you are always in my thoughts, and everything I have is yours. [All you had to do was ask, and I would have given you a goat, or anything else, you requested.]

32 "Isn't it only proper that we should celebrate and rejoice over the fact that your brother who was dead is reborn--and the one who was lost has been found again?"

1. What made the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus so unusual was that sinners and those who were the unrighteous of society were drawn to hear them, a testimony of the power of the Holy Spirit to reach those in need of salvation. This is in stark contrast to the obedient elders in the next verse who (correctly) understand the unrighteous need to repent, but yet hold them in contempt.

2. Jesus has pointed out that on one level the elders of Israel need not repent of willful breaking of the commandments since they are "**just**" in that they scrupulously obey what is required of them. Even so, as He moves into the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus shows that they harbor a self-righteous, ungodly attitude just as the elder son--who obeyed his father. It is thus not so much the Pharisees' "secret sin" or willful violations of the Torah that condemns them, but rather their attitude that corrupts them. There is an additional application in this parable for us, for with the Second Coming of Christ, there may be Gentile Christians who likewise become bitter at the heavenly rejoicing over the return of the Jews.

3. The silver coins were part of an adornment worn with a wedding garment and thus they would have had great sentimental value to the woman.

4. The "**husks**" were carob pods, although probably the sour sort that is not too palatable.

5. "**Servants**" is a mistranslation, for in the culture a servant would never use the term "**Your father**," but rather "My lord" (see Luke 16:5 following). The word also refers to a child, and so the older brother actually asks a local child what is happening.

LUKE CHAPTER 16

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.
 2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.
 3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.
 4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.
 5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?
 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.
 7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.
 8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.¹
 9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.²
 10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.³
 11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?⁴
 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?⁵
 13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
 14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.
 15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.
 16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.⁶
 17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.
 18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.⁷
 19 There was a certain rich man, which was

LUKE CHAPTER 16

1 Jesus also spoke to his disciples: There was a rich man who was told that his overseer was wasting his goods.
 2 He summoned the overseer, and told him, "What is this I've heard about you?! Get the books together for an audit, and plan on finding another job if this accusation against you is true!"
 3 The overseer, knowing he was caught, thought to himself, *What will I do now? My master will fire me for sure. I'm not strong enough to dig ditches, and I refuse to be a beggar!*
 4 *I know! I'll ingratiate myself with my master's debtors so after I'm fired they'll owe me a favor! [I'm going to be fired anyway, so I'll debit their accounts the portion that would have been my commission. Then they'll love me, and give me a roof over my head!]*
 5 So the overseer called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the biggest debtor, "How much do you owe my master?"
 6 The debtor answered, "A hundred gallons of oil." So the overseer said, "Take this invoice, and write down that you owe only fifty!"
 7 The overseer asked another, "How much do you owe my master?" He answered, "A hundred bushels of wheat." So the overseer said, "Take this new invoice, and write that you only owe eighty!"
 8 And the master of the overseer commended the crooked overseer for his shrewd thinking. It's thus true that the people of this world are shrewd to a point, even more than the righteous are [who don't rely on such machinations].
 9 And I say to you, though money is part of an unrighteous system, use it wisely, in a way God would be pleased with, and you will make friends in heaven who--after the money is gone and your life ended--will welcome you into an *eternal* dwelling place.
 10 He who is faithful in the littlest thing will be faithful in more important things. And he who is unjust in the smallest matters will be unjust in greater ones.
 11 If you have thus been unfaithful with the unrighteous things like money you have on earth, how can you expect God to place into your trust the true treasures?
 12 If you have not been faithful in stewarding someone else's goods, who will give you your own goods to watch over?
 13 No servant can serve two masters; he must love the one he will serve, and hate the one he does not serve, and honor one while despising the other. Thus, you cannot serve God [--who wants you to be a giver--] and Mammon [the false god of wealth who wants you to work only to enrich yourself at the expense of others].
 14 When the Pharisees, who were greedy businessmen, overheard these statements they mocked Jesus [for they believed material prosperity was a sign of God's approval].
 15 But Jesus said: You Pharisees try to look good in the eyes of men, but God knows what's really in your hearts--and in His view, what society highly respects is actually an abomination in His sight!
 16 The written Law and the prophets all prophesied until John. Since then, the Kingdom of God has been announced, and people of every sort are pressing into it.
 17 Remember, it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than it is for the smallest point of the Law to be overturned [--even through some so-called "authority of the elders" you claim to have].

clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.⁸
 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,
 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.
 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;
 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
 24 And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.
 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.
 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.
 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:
 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.
 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.
 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.
 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

18 Therefore [whatever *your* rulings on the subject are], whoever divorces his wife so he can marry someone else is guilty of adultery, and anyone who marries her is likewise guilty of adultery.
 19 [Beyond that, listen to this parable:] There was a certain rich man [named Nineue] who was clothed in regal garments, and dined sumptuously each day.
 20 And there was a beggar named Lazarus who was laid by the gate outside the man's house. He had many sores from malnutrition.
 21 Lazarus yearned just to eat some crumbs off the rich man's table [but was never given any]. Worse, the dogs came and licked his open sores [and he was too weak to even fend them off].
 22 Eventually, Lazarus died, and the angels carried him to [Paradise--where Abraham is with the righteous dead]. The rich man died too, and they buried him.
 23 In Hades, the rich man lifted up his eyes in torment and saw Lazarus in the distance being comforted by Abraham.
 24 And he cried out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me! Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and touch my tongue with it, for I am tormented in these flames!"
 25 But Abraham shouted back, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received good and Lazarus evil. [You never showed mercy to him when you should have,] so now he is comforted, and your fate is to be tormented!
 26 "Besides that, there is a great chasm between us, and no one can pass back and forth."
 27 The rich man then said, "Then I beg you, father, to send Lazarus back to my father's house,
 28 "To warn my five brothers to repent, lest they wind up in this place of torment!"
 29 Abraham answered, "Their warning is in the Scriptures--they can read *them* whenever they want!"
 30 But the rich man said, "No, father Abraham--they won't read them or believe them, but if one from the dead comes back and warns them, they'll repent!"
 31 Abraham's last words to him were, "If they won't regard the Scriptures, they won't even believe if a man rises from the dead [and warns them]!"

1. This parable is often misunderstood, for Jesus is not commending the unjust steward for thievery. In the culture, a steward would often work on commission, deriving his pay from what he could collect over and above the actual amount owed to his master. The steward here is canceling the portion of the debt that comprised his commission, making friends in the process among the debtors, who now owe less money.

2. A very difficult verse. Mammon was a god of prosperity that Jesus says one cannot serve while also serving God. What He actually means may be along the lines of the paraphrase, and/or He may be indicting the Pharisees' unfaithfulness with the Torah.

3. In this verse, Jesus is emphasizing how, if we are faithful in the little things in life, we will ultimately be faithful in doing things of greater importance. Conversely, the follower who is lax in upholding a high standard in insignificant things is likely to compromise in more important areas of his life.

4. Better understood as: "*If you have thus been unfaithful with the carnal things you have on earth, how can you expect God to place into your trust the true treasures?*"

5. A reiteration of the previous verse.

6. Jesus here is not saying that the Torah and Old Testament were valid until John the Baptist, and then were replaced. He is saying that the written and oral testaments of the prophets pointed to this moment in history, and that Jesus, verified by John, is the Messiah foretold in Scripture. He then goes on to affirm that the smallest point of the Torah cannot and should not be overturned, yet while the Pharisees regularly criticize *Him* for that, they hypocritically do the same thing with their notion that the elders can modify the Law as they wish, and God is bound to approve of their decisions. (As the Talmud says: *It is more culpable to teach against the ordinances of the scribes than against the Torah itself*—Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 11:3. See also Erubin 21b.) Certainly, a new and better covenant will be instituted, but only after Israel has rejected the Mosaic covenant and Kingdom for the final time with the Crucifixion. But at this point, Jesus is still a Messiah acting under the Mosaic covenant (Gal. 4:4), and offering the fulfillment of that covenant to the people who are steadfastly rejecting Him (Matt. 12:28).

7. One of the very controversial statements of Christ in the Gospels. We must understand that Jesus is saying these words to a culture in which polygamy, though uncommon, is perfectly Scriptural.* His teaching also is in direct contradiction to the school of Hillel, which had a very liberal view toward divorce, allowing it for so little as a wife's burning dinner. Jesus is making the point that a man who divorces a wife in order to marry someone else is guilty of adultery, and the divorced wife is still legally married to

the husband. (Note that in ancient Judaism, only men could initiate a divorce. Even today, a woman must rely on the cooperation of her husband in the matter to finalize the divorce if *she* initiates it within the Jewish religious court system.)

* Rabbi Gershom formally overturned polygamy for most Jews in the 11th century.

8. This famous parable is a strong indictment against the doctrine of "Soul Sleep" taught by the 7th-Day Adventists among others. It also makes clear that beliefs in reincarnation or ghosts are false concepts, for as Hebrews says: "**And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.**" (Heb 9:27). A point missed by readers of this parable is that it shows a man (Lazarus) who perfectly fulfilled God's call on his life as a witness of the Gospel. Each time the rich man saw him lying at his gate, God was showing him his own spiritual condition. He never got the message and in the end was damned. Lazarus' earthly life, meanwhile, may have been a miserable one, but unlike most people he died having done exactly what God had wanted him to do in proclaiming the call to the lost for repentance, and was rewarded for it both in eternity and by earning a mention in Scripture. Note that the Coptic Bible actually gives a name to the rich man, Nineue (Nineveh). Finally, the parable deals a severe blow to the doctrine of Purgatory, for we see Lazarus taken straight to Paradise upon death--something incompatible with the doctrine.

LUKE CHAPTER 17

1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!
 2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.
 3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.¹
 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.
 5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.
 6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.²
 7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?
 8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?
 9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.
 10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.
 11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.
 12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:³
 13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.
 14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.
 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,
 16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.
 17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?
 18 There are not found that returned to give glory to

LUKE CHAPTER 17

1 Then Jesus told the disciples: It is inevitable that testing and opposition to my followers will arise, but woe to the one who brings it!
 2 It would be better for that man to have an [anchor] tied around his neck and to be thrown into the sea, than that he should cause a young follower of mine to stumble.
 3 So watch yourselves. If a fellow believer does some wrong to you, let him know how he has hurt you. If he repents, forgive [and forget].
 4 If he wrongs you seven times a day, and seven times a day comes back saying, "I apologize," forgive him every time!
 5 The apostles now said to the Lord: Increase our faith.
 6 The Lord replied: If you had faith as small as a mustard seed, you could cause that sycamine tree over there to be plucked up by the roots and be cast into the sea if you spoke the command to it in faith, believing.
 7 Now which of you, whose servant comes in from the fieldwork or the pasture, says to him, "Go sit down, and enjoy dinner"?
 8 Don't you instead tell the servant, "Go prepare my dinner, and after I've dined, you can have dinner yourself"?
 9 Do you praise the servant for doing nothing more than what is expected of him? I think not!
 10 So likewise you, when you have done all that God commands you to, should have an attitude that says, "We are nothing special--we are only servants doing our duty!" [When you understand that, faith--no matter how small--will help you to effectively do what God has ordained you to.]
 11 In time, Jesus passed along the border of Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem.
 12 And as he entered a village, ten lepers met him, and stood a distance from him.
 13 They cried out: Jesus! Master! Have mercy on us!
 14 When Jesus saw them, he said: Go to the Temple and show yourselves to the priests. As they were on their way to do that, their diseases were cleansed, and dried up.
 15 One man, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus and shouted praise to God for the miracle.
 16 Then he fell face down at Jesus' feet and thanked him. This man was a Samaritan, by the way.
 17 Jesus looked about, and said: I thought there were ten men cleansed. Where are the other nine?
 18 Only one--a Samaritan "stranger" at that--has returned to give God glory.
 19 So Jesus told the Samaritan: Arise, and go your

God, save this stranger.
 19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.⁴
 20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:⁵
 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.
 22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.
 23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.
 24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.⁶
 25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.
 26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.
 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.
 28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;
 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.
 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.
 31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.
 32 Remember Lot's wife.
 33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.
 34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.
 35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
 36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
 37 And they answered, and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles⁷ be gathered together.

way--your faith has made you whole! [And his skin became as if he had never had leprosy.]
 20 Now later, the Pharisees came to Jesus and demanded to know when the Kingdom of God would appear [since they knew Jesus had been claiming it was being offered to them]. But Jesus answered and said to them: The Kingdom of God will not start as something you can see with your eyes. [That's why you all make the mistake of thinking expelling the Romans from Israel is the real proof the Kingdom of God has arrived!]
 21 No one will say, "You can see it here," or, "You can see it there." The Kingdom of God [starts with the human heart].
 22 Jesus told the disciples: The days [of persecution] will come when you will yearn to see one of the wonderful days of the Kingdom that the Son of Man has promised will come, and he will reign in. But you will not see that happen.
 23 They will tell you, "He's here!" or "He's there!" But don't believe it or follow them to see if it's true.
 24 For as lightning flashes across the sky from east to west, that's how quickly the Son of Man will return in his Day [and all the earth will see it].
 25 But first, he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation of Israel.
 26 When the Son of Man *does* return, it will be in days similar to when Noah built the ark.
 27 In those days, [they didn't realize judgment was at hand, and] life went on perfectly normal--people marrying and giving in marriage--until the day Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.
 28 Likewise, in the day Lot left Sodom, they were eating, drinking, transacting business, planting and building.
 29 Yet the same day that Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone fell down from heaven and destroyed everyone.
 30 It will be exactly the same when the Son of Man is finally seen by the world for what he is!
 31 In that day, let the man on his housetop not pause to take anything out of the house before fleeing. Let the man in the fields not turn back either.
 32 Remember Lot's wife [and how she turned to salt when *she* looked back!]
 33 Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it. Whoever shall lose his life will save it.
 34 I tell you that in that night two will be sleeping in bed, and one will be received and taken, while the other will be rejected and left behind.
 35 Two women will be grinding together. One will be received and taken, while the other will be rejected and left behind.
 36 Two men will be out in a field. One will be received and taken, and the other left behind.
 37 The disciples asked: Where will they be taken to, Lord? Jesus answered: [To safety above the carnage, as the vultures beneath hover above the battlefield below until the slaughter is over and the feast begins!]

1. Although Jesus seems to suggest that one is required to forgive only if an offending brother repents, Matthew 18:22's parallel passage reveals we are to forgive all offenses. The exception is if the man rejects the elders of the church who side with the person offended.

2. Jesus is basically saying, "If you had faith to start with, it would grow of its own accord; you wouldn't need to ask Me to increase it for you." Interestingly, the most positive thing Jesus ever had to say about the apostles' faith was that it was "**little**" (Matt. 6:30); much of the time, they had "**no faith**" at all.

3. The Torah (Lev. 13) commanded them to stay out of (walled) cities, hence the reason they stood "**afar off**."

4. An interesting event showing that while God's blessing is available to anyone through grace, wholeness comes through praise and

thanksgiving. As an interesting side-note, some Jewish legends (Wis. 16:20, 28) held that those who received the manna in the wilderness with thanksgiving were blessed with its tasting like whatever food they wanted. Most of the rest of the stiff-necked Hebrews did not receive that blessing because of their ingratitude--and, although the manna sustained them, eventually they reached a point where they loathed the manna and desired meat (Num. 11:6).

5. As always, the Jews equate the Messianic coming with deliverance from (temporal) bondage. Jesus likewise reiterates that the coming of God's Kingdom is starting with a change in the heart of man and not with the creation of a temporal kingdom of Israel.

6. See the commentary in Matthew 24 for additional information.

7. Most commentators believe "**vulture**" is a better translation. The verse otherwise is one of the most difficult to exegete clearly, and the paraphrase makes one attempt, which is only a speculation based on a potential tie-in with Rev. 19:17-21.

LUKE CHAPTER 18

1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;
5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.
6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?¹
9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves² that they were righteous, and despised others:
10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.
11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.
12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.
13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.
14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified³ rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.
15 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.
16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.
17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.
18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?
19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.⁴
20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.
21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.
22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto

LUKE CHAPTER 18

1 Jesus now spoke a parable to the disciples, illustrating the need for persistent prayer, and not to grow faint:
2 There was once a corrupt judge in a city who had no fear of God, nor respect for man.
3 A widow in that city came to him and [repeatedly] said, "Give me justice against the one who wronged me!"
4 He ignored her for a while, but eventually he said to himself, "I may not regard God nor man,
5 "But this troublesome widow is driving me crazy! I'll give her the justice she asks for, lest she make me look like a fool by her endless public nagging!"
6 And the Lord concluded: Note what the corrupt judge said.
7 [If an unjust judge would give justice to a widow he cared nothing for because of her persistence,] won't God avenge His own elect people who cry out for His help, even if He delays the answer for a long time?
8 I tell you that He will avenge them all at once. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man returns to earth, will his people still have faith in him [or will they have lost their faith, and given up]?
9 Then he spoke this parable about those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others [who did not measure up to their standard]:
10 Two men--a Pharisee and a tax collector--went up to the Temple to pray.
11 The Pharisee stood and prayed like this to himself: "God, I thank you that I am not like the sinners--a thug, an unjust man, or an adulterer. I'm not even like this tax collector!"
12 "I fast two days a week, and tithe on all I own!"
13 Meanwhile, the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift his eyes up to heaven, but struck his breast, saying, "God--grant atoning mercy to me, the sinner!"
14 I tell you, the tax collector went home with God's approval and forgiveness, rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted.
15 Later, women brought their babies for Jesus to touch [and bless], but when the disciples saw this, they criticized them.
16 But Jesus called the children to him, and said: Allow the little children to come to me, and don't hold them back, for the Kingdom of God is made up of ones just like them.
17 And I tell you truly that anyone who does not receive the Kingdom of God [into his heart] like a child will not enter it!
18 Some time later, an important official asked: Good master--what must I do to inherit eternal life?
19 Jesus replied: No *man* is good--only *God* is good!

him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:

33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.

34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.⁵

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:

36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him,

41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?

And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

20 But you know the commandments: Don't commit adultery. Don't murder. Don't [kidnap or rob]. Don't lie about someone. Take care of your father and mother.

21 The official then said: I've kept all these from my youth, on up!

22 When Jesus heard that, he said: There's only one thing you haven't done: Sell all you have, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, and follow me!

23 When the official heard this, he was very grieved, for he was very rich.

24 When Jesus saw how the man became grieved at this, he said: How hard it will be for those with riches to enter the Kingdom of God.

25 It is easier for a [rope] to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.

26 Those who heard this asked: Who can be saved then?

27 Jesus said: The things that are impossible for man are fully possible with God!

28 Then Peter said: We've left all, and followed you.

29 And he responded: I tell you truly, no man has left house, parents, brothers, wife or children for the sake of God's Kingdom,

30 Who will not receive much more of these things in this life, and--in the Messianic Age--everlasting life.

31 Then he took the twelve aside, and told them: Look--we are going to Jerusalem, and all the things the prophets wrote about the Son of Man will come to pass.

32 He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked, abused, and spat on.

33 They will whip him and put him to death--but on the third day he will rise again!

34 But the disciples didn't understand anything Jesus told them. It was as if the meaning of Jesus' words was supernaturally hidden from them.

35 Now later, as Jesus approached Jericho, there was a blind man sitting by the side of the road, begging.

36 Hearing the crowd move by, the man [--bar Timaeus--] asked what was happening.

37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was coming down the road.

38 When he heard that, he screamed out at the top of his lungs: Jesus--Son of David--have mercy on me!

39 The crowd moving down the road with Jesus tried to silence him, but he screamed out all the louder: Son of David--have mercy on me!

40 Jesus came to a halt, and ordered that the man be brought forth. When they led him over, he asked the beggar:

41 What would you like me to do for you? He said: Lord, let me receive my sight!

42 And Jesus said: Receive your sight then--your faith has saved you!

43 And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, shouting praises to God; and all the people praised God with him when they saw this miracle.

1. The purpose of the parable is to encourage us to pray without ceasing and not give up even though it looks as if the answer will never come. This is very important because many brethren will face a prolonged trial lasting years without let-up.

2. Jesus here nails down the heresy present in portions of Judaism and Christianity: the conscious or unconscious belief that one is acceptable to God because of his lifestyle. The Pharisee here is no different from the Catholic, Baptist, Pentecostal, or Orthodox Jew

who perceives himself to be in obedience to the commandments, and on that basis feels secure in his relationship with God. Admittedly, it's human nature to "feel good" when one thinks he's walking the walk. The truth is, it's only on the basis of faith and faith alone that Christ is the atonement for our sins that we can feel secure. The danger comes at a point when we do so well at living a lifestyle we believe is expected of us that we start placing our security in our obedience.

3. A critical verse that must be weighed against the false teachings of those who pervert the words of James and claim our deeds will be some sort of measuring rod of whether or not we are really saved. Here, Jesus makes it clear that the sinner who did nothing more than confess his sin and beg mercy went home forgiven and "**justified**." The heresy some denominations teach--that earthly deeds will be reviewed to gauge whether or not eternal life can or will be granted--is directly refuted here. God can never factor in works to determine guilt or innocence, for even the most pious saint stands condemned by his sinful actions in life, however few they may have been, that fall short of the righteousness of God. It is only a question of whether or not we have atonement for our sin, and an impartation of divine righteousness to allow us to dwell in the presence of the Almighty. Works from that point matter only for determining reward or punishment.

Also, various Catholic and Orthodox theologians commonly make the claim that Scripture never teaches the notion of a man confessing sins to someone other than a priest, and being forgiven. This verse refutes that claim.

4. Jesus is neither denying He is good, nor is He denying He is Deity, for He acknowledges He is without sin (John 8:46) and admits he is the "**Good Shepherd**" (John 10:14). Rather, He is making the point that only God and God alone is truly good. By extension, since Christ Himself admits He is good in the ultimate sense of being the shepherd of God's flock, He also is affirming His divinity.

5. An interesting verse. There is a possibility that there was actually a supernatural confusion regarding Christ's coming crucifixion from God sent upon not only the apostles, but upon the devil himself. Presumably, the devil would be able to hear Christ's own words that He would be crucified and then rise again, yet he follows through with the Crucifixion rather than halting it to frustrate Christ's ultimate mission and prophecy. Rom. 1:28, 11:8, 1 Cor. 2:8 and 2 Thess. 2:11 speak to God's sending or allowing supernatural delusion or else false beliefs upon people.

LUKE CHAPTER 19

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.
 2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus,¹ which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.
 3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.
 4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.
 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.
 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.
 7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.
 8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.
 9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.
 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.
 11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.²
 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.
 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.
 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.
 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.
 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath

LUKE CHAPTER 19

1 Jesus then entered and passed through Jericho.
 2 Now there was a chief tax collector who lived there named Zacchaeus, and he was extremely wealthy.
 3 He was curious about who Jesus was, and wanted to catch a glimpse of him, but could not see through the crowd because he was a very short man.
 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus since he was coming that way.
 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up, saw him, and said: Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I have a divine appointment to stay at *your* house today!
 6 So Zacchaeus quickly climbed down from the tree and received him into his house with joy.
 7 When the crowd saw it, they all murmured: He's being the guest of a sinner!
 8 But Zacchaeus stood there, and said to Jesus: Lord, I am giving half my wealth to the poor, and if I have obtained money from anyone through false accusations, I am restoring it to him fourfold!
 9 Jesus replied to him: Today salvation has come to this house, as Zacchaeus is also a son of Abraham.
 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and save what was lost.
 11 As the crowd heard this, he added a parable because he was nearing Jerusalem, and he knew they mistakenly believed he would immediately bring forth the Kingdom of God [and deliver Israel from Rome].
 12 So he told them: A [prince] departed for a far country to be coronated king, and he planned to return.
 13 Before he left, he called his ten servants and gave each of them an ounce of gold, saying, "Keep charge of my treasures until I return."
 14 But the citizens of his lands hated him, and sent a delegation after him that told his father: "We will not have this man reign over us!"
 15 When he returned as king, in complete authority of the kingdom, he called for the servants he had given the money to, wishing to see what they had done with it and how much they had earned for him through trading.
 16 The first came up, and said, "Lord, I have turned your one ounce of gold into ten ounces!"

gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.³

28 And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.

31 And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

38 Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered, and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in

17 The King said, "Well done, you good servant!

Because you have been faithful with very little, have charge over ten of my cities!"

18 The second came, and said, "Lord, I've turned your one ounce into five ounces of gold!"

19 The King said likewise, "Have charge over five of my cities!"

20 But another came up, and said, "Lord--here is your ounce, which I've kept hidden in a pouch.

21 "I feared you, because you're an austere man who leaves others to take the responsibility for your goods, and then you take from them anything they earn."

22 Then the King told him, "You wicked servant! I will judge you by the words you just spoke! So you knew I was an austere man who lays the responsibility for my goods on the backs of others, and takes from them the profits they make, eh?

23 "Then why didn't you at least put my gold in the bank so I could get some interest? [You have shown yourself to be totally useless!]"

24 Then the King said to his guards, "Take his ounce of gold and give it to the man who made ten ounces!"

25 And the guards said, "Lord--he already has *ten* ounces!"

26 The King replied: "Everyone who has will be given more, and he who doesn't have shall see taken away from him whatever he seems to have!

27 "Now as for those enemies of mine who said they would not have me to rule over them--bring them here, and slay them before my eyes!"

28 After he had spoken this, Jesus led the way, ascending to Jerusalem.

29 And as he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he called two disciples, and told them:

30 Go into that village over there, and as you enter it you will find a donkey tied up that no one has ever ridden before. Untie it, and bring it here.

31 If anyone asks, "Why are you untying the donkey?" say to them, "Because the Lord has need of him!"

32 So they went out and found it as Jesus had said.

33 And indeed, as they were untying the donkey, its owners accosted them and demanded to know: Why are you untying the donkey?!

34 They replied: The Lord has need of him!

35 So they brought the donkey to Jesus, placed their cloaks upon its back, and sat Jesus upon it.

36 And as Jesus went, the people tossed their cloaks on the road before the beast.

37 When he had come to the peak of the Mount of Olives and began the descent, all Jesus' disciples loudly began to shout praises to God for all the miracles they had seen,

38 Saying: **Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.**

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd were offended, and said: Teacher--rebuke your disciples!

40 But Jesus answered: I assure you that if *they* keep silent, the rocks themselves will immediately shout out!

41 When he neared the city, he looked upon it and began to cry in grief,

42 Saying: Even if today you had recognized God's

this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;

46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,⁴

48 And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

peace [and what you should have done to receive it]--but now it is too late, and your eyes are blinded.

43 For the days will come where your enemies will dig a trench around you, and they'll surround you on every side.

44 And they will tear you down to the ground, along with your people inside of you, and they will not leave two bricks cemented together--and all this because you did not recognize the day of your visitation.

45 Jesus then went into the Temple and began to throw out those who bought and sold there,

46 Saying: It is written: *My house is the house of prayer*; but you have made it a den of thieves!

47 And he taught daily in the courts of the Temple, but the chief Sadducee priests, the Torah teachers, and the influential people of the city sought to destroy him.

48 But they didn't know how, for the people hung on every word Jesus spoke.

1. According to Clement of Alexandria, Zaccheus was another name for Matthias, chosen in Acts to replace Judas.

2. Meaning they expected Jesus, as Messiah, to free Israel as soon as He reached Jerusalem to establish His Kingdom.

3. A parable warning that the Jews who would refuse Christ's authority over them would ultimately perish for it.

4. Headed by the collaborating Sadducees (probably from the Boethusians--the rich, priestly class), the Temple Scribes (Torah teachers/interpreters), and apparently the influential men of Jerusalem determine to put a stop to Jesus.

LUKE CHAPTER 20

1 And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders¹,

2 And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

3 And he answered, and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me:

4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

5 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

6 But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

7 And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.

8 And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.

11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.

12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.

14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they

LUKE CHAPTER 20

1 During one of the days Jesus was teaching at the Temple and preaching the Gospel, the Boethusians [--the elite of the Sadducee priests--] along with the Torah teachers and city elders, finally came to Jesus.

2 They demanded to know: Tell us by what authority you presume to come here and do these things! Or who was it who gave you authority to do these things?!

3 Jesus replied: I'll answer that if you'll answer one thing for me:

4 John's Baptism [and ministry]--did God give it to him, or was it his own invention?

5 And they reasoned how to answer, saying: If we say God gave it to him, he will ask: "Why didn't you believe him then?"

6 But if we say John made it up on his own, we'll be stoned by the people, for they are convinced he was a prophet.

7 So they answered that they didn't know what its origin was.

8 Jesus responded by saying: Then I will not tell you by what authority I do these things!

9 Then he told them a parable: A man planted a vineyard, and leased it out to sharecroppers before leaving for a long time to go to a distant country.

10 At harvest time, he sent a servant to the sharecroppers to collect his share of the harvest, but the sharecroppers beat him and sent him back empty-handed.

11 He sent another servant who was also beaten, treated shamefully, and sent back empty-handed as well.

12 So he sent a third. This one was also wounded, and thrown out of the vineyard.

13 Then the lord of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I know! I'll send my own beloved son. They may respect him, at least, when they see him!"

14 But when the sharecroppers saw the son coming, they huddled together, and said, "This is the heir--let's kill him, and take the inheritance for ourselves!"

15 So they threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

19 And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.²

20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered, and said, Caesar's.

25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

27 Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him,

28 Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us³, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children.

30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.

31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died.

32 Last of all the woman died also.

33 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife.

34 And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

Now what do you think the lord of the vineyard will do in response?

16 He will come and destroy the sharecroppers, and give the vineyard to others [who will be faithful]. When Jesus' opponents heard this, they said: God forbid!

17 But Jesus looked them up and down, and said: Then what do you think these verses mean? **The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.**

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

19 That did it. The chief Sadducee priests and the Torah teachers realized Jesus was speaking about them directly, and they would have taken him then and there. But they didn't dare make a move because they feared the crowds.

20 So they watched him, using spies who infiltrated the crowds, posing as righteous men. They hoped to hear something they could use as evidence allowing them to turn Jesus over to the Roman governor to deal with, using his own power and authority [thus absolving them from blame for whatever happened].

21 These spies told Jesus: Master—we know we can count on you to give an honest answer to a question, because you teach the truth of God without respect for what anyone else thinks.

22 Is it acceptable in the Law for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?

23 But he knew their craftiness, and said: Why are you trying to trick me?

24 Show me a coin of the tribute. Now whose image and name are on it? They answered: Caesar's.

25 So Jesus answered: Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but give to God what is God's!

26 Thus, they could not get Jesus to say anything incriminating in public, and they were so amazed at his answer that they kept silent after that.

27 Then certain of the Sadducees, who deny there is [an immortal soul or] a resurrection of the body, came up,

28 Saying: Master—Moses wrote that if a man dies childless, his brother must marry his wife and provide him an heir so his bloodline doesn't die out.

29 Now there were once seven brothers, and the first—after marrying the woman he was betrothed to—died childless.

30 So his oldest brother married her, but had no children either.

31 Then he died and the third brother married her, and this pattern continued until all seven men died without the woman's ever having a child.

32 Finally, the woman died.

33 Now at the resurrection of the dead, which of the seven would be her husband, since they all were married to her?

34 Jesus answered: Humans in this age marry and are given in marriage.

35 But those worthy of entering into that age and the resurrection of the dead, will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

36 They can't die either, for they are like the angels of God, and are the children of God, being children of the resurrection.

37 But as touching whether there even is [an immortal spirit or] a resurrection of the dead, even Moses showed that there is at the incident of the burning bush, when he

36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.
 37 Now that the dead are raised⁴, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.
 38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.
 39 Then certain of the scribes⁵ answering said, Master, thou hast well said.
 40 And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.
 41 And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son?
 42 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
 43 Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.
 44 David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?⁶
 45 Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples,
 46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;
 47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

called God, "The God who is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
 38 For God is not a God of the dead, but of those who are alive, [for anyone in Him can never die]!
 39 Then a few of the [Pharisee] Torah teachers called out: Master, that was a marvelous answer!
 40 After that, the Sadducees gave up, and dared not ask more questions.
 41 Jesus now asked [the Pharisees]: How is it said that the Messiah is the son of *David*?
 42 For didn't David himself, in the book of Psalms, say:
The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
 43 **Till I make thine enemies thy footstool?**
 44 [Since, in our culture, a father always outranks his son,] how is it that the Messiah is David's lord if he is *David's* son? [The Messiah must thus be the son of a father even greater than David!]
 45 Then, in the presence of all the people, Jesus told his disciples:
 46 Beware the Torah teachers who want to wear prayer shawls with long threads, and love to be greeted in the marketplace; and have the most prestigious seats in the synagogue, and the best seats at banquets,
 47 Who oppress widows, seizing their homes while making a show of piety outside by their loud public prayers. These will receive greater damnation than the worst sinners!

1. "The elders" probably refers to the 23 members of the Sadducee Sanhedrin, but possibly to the Great Sanhedrin headed by Gamaliel.
2. An important verse showing, once again, that it is the Sadducees, and not necessarily the Pharisees, who are Christ's main antagonists.
3. The Sadducees, remember, accept only the first five books of the Old Testament, none of which speaks of the Resurrection, and thus they ask a question in hope of showing how foolish belief in a resurrection of the dead must be.
4. Jesus now shifts His comments to prove that not only is there a resurrection, but that the righteous dead are even now conscious in the grave, for, as shown in Matt. 22:32, God's words to Moses "I am the God of Abraham," etc., show that God continues on as the God of the Patriarchs, which is not possible if the dead Patriarchs have passed from conscious existence. The argument is equally valuable against the false doctrine of "Soul Sleep."
5. Pharisees amongst the Scribes.
6. See the commentary under Matt. 22:45.

LUKE CHAPTER 21

1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.
 2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.
 3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:
 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.
 5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,
 6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
 7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?¹
 8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after

LUKE CHAPTER 21

1 Jesus then looked up and noted how the rich were casting money into the [trumpet-shaped] collection boxes.
 2 Finally, a poor widow came along and cast in two pennies.
 3 Jesus said: I tell you truly--of all the people donating, this poor widow gave more than any of them!
 4 For they put into the offering boxes to God out of their surplus [after they had paid off all their bills], but she, despite her poverty, gave all that she had to live on.
 5 Now some were remarking about how impressed they were with the majesty of the Temple complex, and the way it was built and adorned with carved stones and elaborate gifts consecrated by wealthy patrons to God, but Jesus said:
 6 These things you're looking at--the days will come when not so many as two stones will be left cemented together. All will be thrown down into rubble!
 7 So they asked him: Master--when will these things happen? What sign will be happening to show the season is at hand for that?

them.
 9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.
 10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation², and kingdom against kingdom:
 11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.
 12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.
 13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.
 14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:
 15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.
 16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.
 17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.
 18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.
 19 In your patience possess ye your souls.
 20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.
 21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.
 22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.
 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.
 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.
 25 And³ there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;
 26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.
 27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
 28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.
 29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;
 30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.
 31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.
 32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.⁴
 33 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words

8 Jesus said: Take care that you are not deceived! As the time draws near, many will come, usurping my position, and saying, "I am the Messiah," and, "The time [of the Kingdom] is near!" Don't listen to them or follow them.
 9 And when you hear about wars and uprisings, don't be terrified. These things will come, but the end won't come quite yet.
 10 Then he added: Race will battle race, and kingdom will battle kingdom.
 11 There will be great earthquakes, famines, and plagues--and fearful sights and great signs in the skies above!
 12 But before all this, they will capture and persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues [and their religious tribunals], and into prisons; and you'll be taken before kings and governors for [proclaiming who and what I am].
 13 But all these persecutions will be an opportunity to testify of me.
 14 So don't decide beforehand to plan what your defense will be,
 15 For I [through the Spirit] will give you the words of wisdom to speak that no one will be able to counter.
 16 You will be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and some of you they will even cause to be put to death.
 17 All men will hate you for your being my ambassadors and heralds of who and what I am.
 18 But not so much as a hair of your head will be lost.
 19 [By standing firm in your faith, you will deliver your souls from *true* death!]
 20 And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its destruction has come.
 21 Let all who are in Judea escape to the mountains, and let those in the city run for their lives. But let no one in the country go to Jerusalem for refuge!
 22 For those will be the days of vengeance, so everything that has been prophesied in Scripture will be fulfilled.
 23 Woe to those who are pregnant then, and those who nurse infants. At that time will be great distress in the land, and great wrath unleashed upon this people.
 24 And the Jews will fall to the sword and be led away as captives to all the Gentile nations, and Jerusalem will be in the control of the Gentiles until the Age of the Gentiles has ended.
 25 And [when that Age ends,] there will be things seen in the sun, the moon, and the stars that have never been seen before, while on the earth mankind will be perplexed and powerless to stop nature from turning itself inside and out. Tidal waves will roar across the seas.
 26 Men's hearts will stop out of sheer terror for what they see happening on earth, for the demonic entities in the heavens will be shaken [and cast down to perdition--and the entire universe will heave to and fro with their downfall].
 27 Then everyone shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.
 28 So when you see these things start to happen--look up and lift your heads, for your redemption is at hand!
 29 Jesus then spoke a parable: Consider the fig tree, and other sorts of trees.
 30 When they sprout leaves, you know summer is near.
 31 In the same way, when you begin to see these things happen, know that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

shall not pass away.

34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape⁵ all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

37 And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

32 I tell you truthfully, the generation that sees these things will not pass away before everything will be fulfilled.

33 The entire universe and the earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

34 And take care that you not get lazy, letting your hearts lead you into dissipation, drunkenness, easy living, and worrying about the cares of this life--lest the day catch you by surprise [for it will be too late to repent at that time].

35 That day will come as fast as a trap catches an animal to those dwelling upon the face of the earth.

36 Keep watch then, and pray always that you will be counted worthy to escape the things that will be coming, and to stand before the Son of Man!

37 Now Jesus would teach in the Temple during the day, and at night he would go out to the Mount of Olives to camp on its slopes.

38 And everyone came early in the morning to hear him preach at the Temple.

1. Following this question, Jesus interweaves prophetic warnings about both the fall of Jerusalem to Titus 40 years hence, and also the fall of Jerusalem in the end times. (We can quickly deduce this by verse 24, in which Jesus asserts that the state lasts “**until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled**,” which obviously was far ahead from the generation alive in 30 AD). The difficulty lies in putting the pieces together to gain a clear picture of what is being foretold when.

2. Better translated as: “**Race (or ethnic group) shall rise up against race**.”

3. Some theologians, watering down the Bible’s teaching on the end times by relegating Christ’s words only to apocalyptic language on the fall of the Temple, miss that He has now transitioned to a period of time beyond the Diaspora to a point where “**the times of the Gentiles**” will come to an end--which, as noted, certainly did not happen in 70 AD, nor even yet! His words that follow about signs in the heavens and men’s hearts failing them must be understood in that context, and so are not figurative language referring to generalized judgment on Israel, but to literal final judgment on the earth at His actual return!

4. Another instance of Jesus making a dual prophecy, for skeptics seize on the fact that apparently He is foretelling His second coming within the lifetime of those listening, when He is referring to two separate falls of Jerusalem, the first of which did come to pass within the lifetimes of those alive when these words were uttered; and the second that will occur within the lifetimes of those who see the Temple rebuilt. Even the apostles, because of statements like this, at first mistakenly believed Jesus would return in their lifetimes--and certainly within the lifetime of John (John 21:23)! It is thus important to understand that while the apostles wrote infallibly, they did not orally *teach* infallibly, and so the concept of infallible oral tradition is refuted by the Gospel record of some incorrect doctrines verbally taught for a time by the apostles such as that in John 21:23 we’ve noted.

5. A verse commonly employed to help verify the notion of a pre-trib. Rapture. The word for “**escape**,” interestingly enough, refers not to escaping in the sense of having danger pass over one without harming him, but rather to physically flee or be spatially removed from it.

LUKE CHAPTER 22

1 Now the Feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.

2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.¹

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.²

8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?

10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house,

LUKE CHAPTER 22

1 [Now the feasts of Passover and Unleavened bread had come.]

2 And the chief Sadducee priests and the Torah teachers debated how to kill Jesus safely, for they feared the people.

3 Satan then entered Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve apostles.

4 And he went out and conspired with the chief priests and the Temple officers to betray Jesus to them.

5 Jesus’ enemies rejoiced at this, and agreed to pay Judas a bribe for his aid.

6 So Judas agreed to betray Jesus at a time when the crowds weren’t around him.

7 Then came the days of Unleavened Bread, and the time when the Passover lamb was slain.

8 Jesus sent Peter and John into Jerusalem, telling them: Go prepare our Passover so we may eat the lamb.

9 They asked: Where do you want us to prepare it?

10 Jesus answered: When you go into town, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him to the house he goes into.

11 Tell the owner of the house, “The Master asks, ‘Where is the guest chamber where I can eat the Passover with my disciples?’”

The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he³ shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

23 And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.⁴

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you,⁵ that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he

12 He will show you a large furnished room on an upper floor. Prepare there.

13 So the two went. It happened as Jesus had said, and they made preparations to hold their Passover *seder*.

14 Then, when the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table along with the twelve apostles.

15 Jesus said: I have been anxious to eat this Passover with you before my time of suffering.

16 For I say to you that I will not eat it again until what it represents is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

17 And he took the cup, gave thanks, and said: Take this, and each of you drink from it.

18 I tell you, I will not drink wine again [until what this represents is on the earth in its fullness in the Kingdom of God].

19 Then Jesus took bread and blessed God. He broke it and handed it out, saying: This is my body, which is given up for you. Continue eating it in remembrance of me.

20 He said the same about the cup, adding: This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

21 But look--the hand of my betrayer is with me on the table.

22 It's true that the Son of Man will go on to what awaits him, as it was determined--but woe to that man who is betraying him to that!

23 The disciples then began wondering among themselves who would be the betrayer.

24 Then they fell to arguing over which was the most important of them.

25 Jesus watched this, and said: Gentile kings act like gods over their subjects, and the people esteem them for their position and call them benefactors.

26 But you must not be like that! He that is the most important of you must think of himself as no greater than a teacher's youngest pupil. And the one who considers himself the leader must prove it by being the greatest servant to the rest.

27 For [normally] who is more important? The one who sits and eats, or the servant who brings the meal? The one who sits and eats, right? Yet here I am as the servant [so follow my example].

28 You are the ones who have stood with me during my trials.

29 And I appoint for you a kingdom as my Father has reserved one for me,

30 So you can eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and then occupy twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

31 The Lord then spoke to Peter, saying: Shimon! Shimon! Satan has plotted against you [all], to try to sift you like wheat.

32 But I have prayed that your faith not fail you, and when you have found yourself and turned back, strengthen your brothers.

33 But Peter replied to him: Lord, I am ready to go with you to the dungeon and to death if need be!

34 Jesus replied: Peter, the "rooster" won't crow this morning before you deny knowing me three times!

35 And he added: When I sent you out with nothing but the clothes on your backs, what did you wind up lacking? They answered: Nothing.

36 Then he said to them: Now things are different. He

that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.
 37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.
 38 And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.
 39 And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.
 40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.
 41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,
 42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup⁶ from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.
 43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.
 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.
 45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,
 46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.
 47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.
 48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?
 49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?
 50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.
 51 And Jesus answered, and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.
 52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?
 53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.
 54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.
 55 And when they had kindled a fire⁷ in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.
 56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.
 57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.
 58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.
 59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.
 60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.
 61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And

who has a purse, let him carry it [along with his money]. He who has no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one.
 37 For I tell you, this prophecy in Scripture must be fulfilled in me: **And he was reckoned among the transgressors.** The things prophesied about me are coming to a head [and you may need to protect yourselves].
 38 They said in response: Look, Lord—we have two swords here. Jesus replied: Those will be enough.
 39 Then Jesus departed, and as was his custom he went to the Mount of Olives, his disciples following along.
 40 When he arrived at his destination, he said to the disciples: Pray that you won't fall into temptation.
 41 Jesus then went ahead a few yards, and knelt down to pray,
 42 Saying: Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Your will be done.
 43 Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him.
 44 Being in great agony, Jesus prayed more earnestly, and sweat great drops of blood that fell to the ground.
 45 When he rose up from prayer and came back to the disciples, he found them asleep, their grief having sapped the strength from them.
 46 And he asked them: Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray, lest temptation get the better of you!
 47 While he was speaking, a crowd of people led by Judas drew near, and Judas came up to kiss Jesus in greeting.
 48 But Jesus said to him: Judas—do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?
 49 When the disciples realized what was happening, they cried out: Lord—do we use the swords?!
 50 Then [Peter] struck a servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear.
 51 Jesus answered: No more! And he touched the man's ear, and healed it.
 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, officers, and city elders who had come for him: So you come out, armed to the teeth with sword and clubs, like you're on the hunt for some bandit?
 53 When I was at the Temple every day, you didn't lay a hand on me, but this is your hour, and the zenith of the Power who rules over Darkness.
 54 Then they took him off to the High Priest's palace. Peter, meanwhile, followed from a safe distance to see what would happen.
 55 When the crowd had kindled a bonfire in the courtyard, Peter managed to sit down and mingle with them.
 56 But a maid saw him by the light of the fire, and fixed her gaze upon him. She said: This man was with him too!
 57 Peter immediately denied it, saying: Woman, I don't know him.
 58 After a little while, someone else saw him, and said: You're also one of them! Peter replied: Sir, I am not!
 59 After about an hour, someone else said confidently: I'm sure this man was with him, for he's a Galilean!
 60 Peter responded: Sir, I have no idea what you're talking about! And as he said this, the "rooster" cried out.
 61 It was then that the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.
 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.
 63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.
 64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?
 65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.
 66 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council⁸, saying,
 67 Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:
 68 And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.
 69 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.
 70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.⁹
 71 And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

And Peter remembered what the Lord had said: "The 'rooster' won't crow before you deny me three times!"
 62 And Peter went off and wept bitterly.
 63 Meanwhile, the men holding Jesus mocked and struck him.
 64 And when they had blindfolded him, they pummeled his face, and said: Prophecy the name of the man who struck you!
 65 And many other blasphemous things they spoke against him.
 66 When dawn came, the elders of the people, along with the most important priests and the Torah teachers, led Jesus into the chamber of their impromptu sanhedrin. They asked:
 67 Are you the Messiah? Tell us! And Jesus replied: If I tell you, you won't believe;
 68 And if I try to defend myself by questioning *you*, you will neither answer me nor let me go.
 69 From now on, the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the Power of God.
 70 Then they all said: So you *are* the Son of God? And he said back: You're proving that I am!
 71 So they said: Who needs more witnesses or evidence? We've heard him blaspheme out of his own mouth!

1. From this, we can see that Judas betrayed Christ not solely for his own reasons, but partially through direct Satanic influence and deception. As noted in the Matthew commentary, the 30 shekels of blood money was no great amount. What precisely was on Judas' mind in all this we will never actually know.
2. Some believe this is technically incorrect, for in the Old Testament the Passover lamb is not slain on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but on Passover itself, a day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins, a point Jewish skeptics sometimes seize upon. However, the two Festivals run into each other and in this time there was also some argument between the Pharisees and Sadducees over how to determine when Pentecost should fall. This resulted in the Sadducees occasionally trying to use false witnesses to swear they had seen the new moon at a time that would have the calendar support their view on when Pentecost should fall. Compounding the problem, the Essenes kept their own separate calendar, which some think Jesus was following. Passover also falls within the days of Unleavened Bread when leaven is removed from the house. Because of all this, both Feasts were largely synonymous; and this is Luke's using a common manner of speech rather than his making an incorrect claim that the Passover lamb is slain on the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
3. This was probably the father and the house of Mark, then a young man. We can surmise this from the fact that in Mark 14:51 a young man, who is often believed to be Mark, accompanies the group to Gethsemane.
4. There is a common Christian misconception that Paul--not Matthias--actually replaced Judas as the 12th apostle, and that he will judge one of the 12 tribes of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. This is untrue, for Paul was the "**apostle to the Gentiles**" and presumably will be the chief head of the Gentile Christians.
5. The word for "**you**" is a plural, suggesting Jesus is stating Satan wants to "**sift**" the whole group. However, when Jesus speaks in verse 32, all His words are in the singular and refer to Peter personally.
6. This is not Jesus praying to avoid being beaten and crucified, but rather a plea to avoid whatever was entailed in His '**becoming sin**' on the cross. Also, the next verse, in which the angel is mentioned, suggests something interesting: that young John Mark was the only one other than Jesus who was awake--for how else could Luke know the angel appeared unless someone other than the sleeping apostles saw it, and told him? Additionally, the *Diatesseron* notes that the angel strengthened Jesus by speaking to Him.
7. By this, we can know it is not yet the actual feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15), for the first day of the Feast is a Sabbath, during which it is forbidden to kindle a fire.
8. Undoubtedly, the local Sadducee Sanhedrin of Jerusalem and not the Pharisee-controlled Sanhedrin, which technically had the right to try Christ.
9. Literally: "**You are saying that I am.**" Possibly understood as: "By your very actions, *you're* saying I am!"--i.e., because of the prophecies that the Messiah would be rejected by Israel.

LUKE CHAPTER 23

1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.
 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.
 3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him, and said, Thou sayest it.¹
 4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the

LUKE CHAPTER 23

1 Then the whole crowd rose up and dragged Jesus off to Pilate.
 2 Once there, they began to make accusations against him, saying: We found this man troubling the nation, and forbidding taxes to be paid to Caesar, saying that he, himself, is the Messiah--a king!
 3 So Pilate asked: Are *you* the King of the Jews?! Jesus answered: You said it!
 4 Then Pilate said to the chief Sadducee priests and the crowd: I find no fault in this man.

people, I find no fault in this man.

5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean.

7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.²

8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)³

18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:

19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian⁴, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

5 Then they became even more raucous, saying: By his teaching, he's been stirring up all the Jews, starting from Galilee to here!

6 When Pilate heard the word "Galilee," he asked if Jesus were a Galilean.

7 When they affirmed this, he decided Jesus was Herod Antipas' responsibility, so he sent him off to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem for Passover.

8 When Jesus arrived, Herod was delighted, for he had long wanted to see him, having heard a lot about him. He also hoped Jesus would show him a miracle.

9 So Herod interrogated him with many questions, but Jesus wouldn't even dignify him with an answer.

10 Meanwhile, the chief priests and the Torah teachers had no shortage of vehement accusations to make against him to Herod.

11 Then Herod and his officers set Jesus before them, and mocked him. After putting an elegant robe on him, they returned him to Pilate.

12 That same day, Herod and Pilate became fast friends. Before this, they were enemies.

13 And Pilate, when he had summoned the chief Sadducee priests, the elders, and the people,

14 Told them: You bring this man to me, and claim he is stirring up an insurrection among the people, but after listening to your charges, I have ruled that he is guiltless of the things you accuse him of.

15 Herod must apparently concur, since I sent you to him, and he returned Jesus alive [—and we know his usual treatment for those threatening him].

16 I will therefore whip him and set him loose [instead of applying a death sentence].

17 For it was a custom at each Feast to give clemency to someone.

18 And they all cried out on the spot: Take this man away! Release bar Abbas instead!

19 Now this bar Abbas was in the dungeon for causing a riot in Jerusalem, and committing murder.

20 Pilate, who still wanted to release Jesus, spoke again, trying to convince them.

21 But they just shouted out: Crucify him! Crucify him!

22 For the third time Pilate spoke, saying: Why? What evil has he done? I haven't found anything he's done that is worthy of the death penalty. I will therefore whip him, and then release him.

23 But they shouted back, insisting on crucifixion. And the voices of the crowd and the chief priests prevailed.

24 Pilate thus gave them the sentence they sought.

25 So he released from prison the seditious murderer they called for, and consigned Jesus to be treated as they demanded.

26 Then the Romans led him away, but they collared a man from Cyrene named Simon, who was coming into town from the country, and laid the cross upon him since Jesus was too exhausted to carry it further. So Simon bore the cross behind Jesus as he walked.

27 A great crowd of people also walked behind, including some women who wailed over what was happening.

28 But Jesus turned to them, saying: Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me—cry for you and your children.

29 For the days are coming when they will say, "Blessed

29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.
 30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.
 31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?
 32 And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.
 33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.
 34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.⁵ And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.
 35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.
 36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,⁶
 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.
 38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
 39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.
 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?
 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.
 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.
 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.
 44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.
 45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.⁷
 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.
 47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.
 48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts⁸, and returned.
 49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.
 50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor;⁹ and he was a good man, and a just:
 51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.
 52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of

are the sterile, and the women who have never given birth and nursed children!”
 30 People will then say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” And to the hills they’ll say, “Cover us!”
 31 [For if the Romans do these things in the spring, when the tree is green and God’s grace has reached out to you, what will they do when the tree dries in winter and God’s grace abandons you?]
 32 Two other criminals were also led out to be crucified with him.
 33 And when they came to the place called Calvary, they crucified him with the criminals on either side of him.
 34 Then Jesus said: Father, forgive them--for they don’t know what they’re doing. Then the guards divided his clothing, and dived for it.
 35 And the people stood watching this. The rulers were there with them, jeering: He saved others--let him save himself if he is the so-called ‘Anointed One,’ the Chosen of God.
 36 And the soldiers mocked him as well, coming forward to offer him some non-kosher vinegar wine,
 37 And saying: If you’re the King of the Jews, save yourself!
 38 A sign was nailed over Jesus’ head that said in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
 39 [Hearing the crowd and seeing the sign,] one of the criminals who was being crucified lashed out at Jesus, saying: If you *are* the Messiah, save yourself *and* us!
 40 But the other rebuked him, saying: Have you no fear of God, knowing we are both going to die this day?
 41 And we deserve it for what we’ve done. But this man did nothing to warrant being here.
 42 Then the man said to Jesus: Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
 43 Jesus answered: I tell you in all truth, today you be with me in Paradise.
 44 It was about noon, and a great shadow was over all the earth until about 3 PM.
 45 And the sun was dark. Then the curtain in the Holy of Holies was torn down the middle [and the doors of the Temple blew open]!
 46 And when Jesus cried out in a loud voice, he said: Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. Having spoken that, Jesus let go, and released his spirit in death.
 47 Now when the centurion overseeing the crucifixion saw this, he glorified God, saying: This man must certainly have been righteous!
 48 All the people who had come to [Calvary] saw these events and smote their breasts in grief. Then they returned to Jerusalem.
 49 And all Jesus’ acquaintances, and the women who followed him from Galilee, stood a distance away, watching all this.
 50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Great Sanhedrin, who was a good and just man.
 51 This same man had opposed what the quorum formed against Jesus ruled and did. He was from the city of Arimathaea [Ramallah], a Judean city; and he was one of those who awaited the arrival of the Kingdom of God.
 52 He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.
 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in fine linen, and had it lain in a new stone sepulcher where no one had

Jesus.
 53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.
 54 And that day was the preparation,¹⁰ and the sabbath drew on.
 55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.
 56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

ever been interred before. [So it was not an unclean sepulcher.]
 54 Now this was the preparation day, and the Sabbath drew on.
 55 And the women from Galilee followed along and saw the sepulcher and how Jesus' body was laid in it.
 56 They returned home and prepared spices and ointments. But they rested until the Sabbath had passed, as the commandment required.

1. The paraphrase takes some poetic license here. Since the Greek lacks punctuation, it may not properly convey the tone Pilate is using here, and it is suspicious that after confirming Jesus' claim to be the King of the Jews (without being appointed to that by Caesar), Pilate immediately **'finds no fault'** in Him. If, however, Pilate finds this to be nothing but a spectacle in that a helpless prisoner in the clothing of a commoner who's been beaten black and blue makes the claims to be King of Israel, his response is understandable—for this may only be some madman rambling on about being a king when he is no threat at all. Thus, the paraphrase offers a different way of looking at this event, which may or may not be accurate, but is food for thought.
2. Herod apparently had left his usual residence in Tiberius to come to Jerusalem for Passover despite his usual lack of religious observance.
3. No extra-biblical evidence exists confirming this apparent custom, although the 2nd century *Diatesseron* claims the custom held true at all Feasts, not just Passover.
4. Simon's sons are later mentioned in Mark 15:21, suggesting they--and probably Simon--were Christians.
5. This is one of the verses that call into question the doctrine of Confession. Here, as in the case with Stephen in Acts, while a group is committing the Mortal sin of murder with no sign of repentance, Jesus calls for their sin to be forgiven them.
6. *Posca*, a Roman vinegar wine.
7. The Talmud records that 40 years before the Temple fell (30 AD or so), the doors to the Temple opened of their own accord, a sign of calamity to come. I tie that to this event, which fits perfectly. I have worded it as "blew open," for I would think the act would have been dramatic.
8. A sign of remorse.
9. Meaning that he was probably a member of the Great Sanhedrin, the body controlled by Gamaliel and the Pharisees, rather than the Jerusalem city Sanhedrin controlled by the Sadducees.
10. The afternoon of Thursday, Nisan 14, 30 AD.

LUKE CHAPTER 24

1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning¹, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.
 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.
 3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.
 4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:
 5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?
 6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,
 7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.
 8 And they remembered his words,
 9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.
 10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James,² and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.
 11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.
 12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that

LUKE CHAPTER 24

1 Very early Sunday morning, the women and a few others returned to the tomb with the spices they had prepared.
 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb's entrance.
 3 Then they entered in, but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
 4 As they stood about, very perplexed, two men appeared in sparkling clothing.
 5 As they fell prostrate before them, being terrified, the men said: Why are you looking for the living among the dead?
 6 He is not here, but has risen! Don't you remember how he told you of this in Galilee,
 7 Saying, *The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and on the third day he will rise again?*
 8 Then they remembered Jesus' words.
 9 So they returned from the tomb, and told all this to the eleven, along with the other followers of Jesus.
 10 It was Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and some other women with them who told the apostles about this.
 11 But their words sounded like women's rambling, so they would not believe them.
 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. When he got there, he stooped down to look in and saw the linen wraps laid down by themselves. He then left, wondering what to make of this.
 13 That same day, two other of Jesus' followers were

which was come to pass.

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass therein these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the

heading for Emmaus, which is seven miles from Jerusalem.

14 The pair were discussing recent events.

15 As they walked and talked, another man caught up to them and began walking with them. It was Jesus.

16 But their eyes were supernaturally closed to seeing him for who he was.

17 And Jesus spoke up, saying: What are you talking about as you walk that makes you look so grieved?

18 One of the two, named Cleopas, answered: Where have *you* been? Are you a stranger in Jerusalem, that you don't know what has been happening there over the past few days?!

19 Jesus asked: What sort of things do you mean? So they answered: The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people.

20 The chief priests and our leaders handed him over to the Romans, who condemned him to death, and they crucified him.

21 We believed that he would be the one who would save and free Israel. It's now three days since he died.

22 The strange thing is, some women of our group told an astounding story about when they visited his tomb early today.

23 They did not find his body, and they claimed they had a vision of angels who told them he was alive.

24 And others we know went to the tomb and found it empty as the women had said, and Jesus was not there.

[So we don't know what to think about all this.]

25 Then Jesus said to them: O fools, with hearts slow to believe *all* that the prophets said in the Scriptures...

26 Wasn't the Messiah *supposed* to suffer these things before entering into his glory?!

27 Then, beginning with Moses' writings and going forward through all the prophets, he showed how the Scriptures foretold all that he would endure.

28 And as they approached the village the two were headed for, he kept walking as though he would continue on.

29 But the pair urged him to come home with them, saying: Stay with us tonight, for evening approaches and the day departs. So Jesus went home to stay with them as they asked.

30 And it came to pass as he sat at dinner with them, that he took bread, blessed and broke it, then gave it to them.

31 Then the mist was gone from their eyes, and they knew at once it was Jesus--but he vanished before they could say a word!

32 Then they said to one another: Didn't our hearts burn inside of us when he talked to us on the road, and explained the Scriptures?

33 So they rushed back to Jerusalem, finding the eleven together with other followers.

34 They were told: The Lord has indeed risen--he appeared to Shimon!

35 Then they shared what had happened during their travels, and how they recognized him when the bread was broken.

36 As they were speaking, Jesus himself appeared in the midst of them, and said: Peace be to you.

37 They were terrified and shocked, thinking it was a

midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.
 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.
 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?
 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.
 40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.
 41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?
 42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.
 43 And he took it, and did eat before them.
 44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.
 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures³,
 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
 48 And ye are witnesses of these things.
 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.
 50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.⁴
 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.
 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:
 53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

spirit.
 38 But he said to them: Why are you troubled, and why are such thoughts arising in your hearts?
 39 Look at the nail holes in my hands and feet, and see it is I. Touch me, and see. A spirit hasn't got flesh and bones as you see me have.
 40 After saying this, he displayed the wounds in his hands and feet.
 41 They were so stunned with joy that they couldn't believe their eyes, so he said to them: Is there any meat here to eat?
 42 So they gave him a piece of broiled fish and part of a honeycomb.
 43 He took these and ate in front of them.
 44 And he said: Remember when I was with you before, I told you all the things had to be fulfilled that were prophesied in the books of Moses, the prophets, and in the Psalms about me.
 45 Then he opened their understanding so they could understand the Scriptures.
 46 And he said to them: Thus it was written, and thus it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day;
 47 And that, in his name, repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, starting in Jerusalem.
 48 All of you are witnesses to spread that message.
 49 And behold, I will send the promise of my Father [--the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit--] upon you. But stay in Jerusalem until you receive the power from on High.
 50 He led them out as far as Bethany. Then he raised his hands and blessed them.
 51 And as he was blessing them, he was parted from them and ascended into heaven.
 52 And the disciples worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
 53 And they were continuously in the courts of the Temple, praising and thanking God. Amen.

1. There is quite a bit of controversy regarding this otherwise plain statement. "Very early in the morning" is traceable to one Greek word (*epiphosk*) that essentially means "dusk," and thus some believe that Jesus arose not on Sunday morning, but Saturday night as the Sabbath ended. This is possible, but is militated against by such things as Matthew 28 in which the Temple guards meet with the Sadducees and concoct the story that they had been asleep while Jesus' body was stolen.

2. Just who this woman is we cannot know with 100% certainty. While it might make sense to believe this "Mary" (Miriam) is the mother of Jesus as well, as we know from John's Gospel, Mary is given over to John by Jesus as He dies on the cross, an unthinkable act if she is the mother of James as well as Jesus. At the same time, that she would not have returned to see to the burial needs of her son, leaving that for others, stretches credulity. Ignoring the apparent inconsistencies, it would not, however, be unreasonable from this verse to presume this is the Virgin Mary, who is mother to at least two sons: Jesus and James.

3. This is a very important verse, for it refers to Jesus opening their minds to understand the hidden meanings behind many of the Scriptures. This is how they have the authority to take some Old Testament verses out of their direct context and apply them to Christ even if in their direct context they refer to someone or something else (such as Matthew's use of Isaiah 7:14 which, in direct context, is neither talking about a virgin birth *nor* the Messiah).

4. Interestingly, Luke compresses Jesus' 40-day ministry after His resurrection into only one verse.

John

The last, or second-last apostolic writing, this Gospel was probably written around AD 96, after John's banishment to Patmos in 95 AD by Domitian, which ended a year later with the emperor's death. Unlike the other Gospels, some events are told out of sequence, and John's Gospel may have been written as a commentary or supplement to other extant Gospel writings.

John's theme is *belief*. Ninety-eight times--nearly three times more than the other Gospel writers combined--he uses the word *pisteuo* (*believe*). This often means to express faith, rather than to intellectually acknowledge something, and the paraphrase will bring that out in some verses.

JOHN CHAPTER 1

1 In the beginning was the Word¹, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God².
2 The same was in the beginning with God.
3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
5 And the Light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe.
8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.
16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.³
17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.⁴
18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.⁵
19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?
20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.
21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.⁶
22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest

JOHN CHAPTER 1

1 **I**n the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God!
2 He was with God when the universe began.
3 Everything that exists was made by him, and nothing came into existence without him.
4 In him was life, and that life was the light of man.
5 And the Light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not extinguished it.
6 Now there was a man sent by God whose name was John [Yochannon].
7 John came to proclaim the Light and lead people to it, that all men might believe through him.
8 John himself was not the Light, but he was sent to bear witness of the Light,
9 Which was the true Light that enlightens every man, the Light that comes into the world.
10 He was in the world and made the world, but the world did not know who he was.
11 He came to his own, but his own people would not accept him.
12 But to as many as did accept him and place faith in his person and position, he gave the power to become the sons of God.
13 For these sons were born not of blood, nor through the will of human flesh, but [were born in spirit] through the will of God.
14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we beheld his glory--which was the glory of one begotten by the Father, full of grace and truth!
15 John bore witness of him, and proclaimed: This is the one about whom I have been saying, "He who is coming after me is preferred to me, for he existed before me!"
16 And we have all partaken from his fullness, and received [undeserved] grace upon grace.
17 For the Law was given by Moses--but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ!
18 No man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed Him to us.
19 Now this is what happened during John's ministry: The Judeans sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem, asking: Just who are you?
20 He didn't hold back, and made it clear: I am not the Messiah!
21 So they asked: If you're not the Messiah, who and what are you? Are you Elijah? John said: I am not. So they asked: Then are you the prophet Moses said was

thou of thyself?

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin⁷ of the world.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;⁸

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.⁹

coming [whom all the people were required to hear]?

And John answered: No.

22 To this, they said: Then who are you? Tell us who you claim to be so we can report to the elders who sent us.

23 John's answer was: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, *Make straight the path of the Lord*, as Isaiah prophesied.

24 Now those who had been sent, went out at the behest of the Pharisees.

25 And they asked John: Why are you baptizing if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?

26 John answered: I am immersing in mere water, but there is a man standing amongst you all, whom you don't know.

27 He's the one coming after me, who is preferred to me--a man whose sandal straps I am unworthy to untie.

28 These things happened in Bethabara, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing people.

29 The next day, John saw Jesus coming to him, and he exclaimed: Behold the [sacrificial] Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

30 He is the one of whom I said, "After me, a man is coming who is preferred to me, for he existed before me."

31 I did not know who he was, but I knew he was coming to be revealed to Israel, and so I started baptizing with water [as a precursor to his arrival].

32 And John testified about him, saying: I saw the Holy Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and resting upon him.

33 And as I say, I did not know who he was, but [God] who sent me to baptize with water also told me, "The one upon whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who will baptize people with the Holy Spirit."

34 And I saw this happen, and I proclaim that he is the Son of God!

35 The next day, John was standing [at the river] with two of his disciples.

36 He saw Jesus walking in the distance, and once more said: Behold the Lamb of God!

37 The two disciples heard this, and followed after Jesus.

38 Jesus turned and saw them following, and he said: What is it that you are looking for? They answered: Rabbi--which is interpreted as *master*--where are you staying?

39 He said to them: Come and see. So they followed to where he was staying and remained with him that day, for it was around [4 PM].

40 One of the two who had heard John speak, and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Shimon Peter's brother.

41 He went out and found his own brother, Shimon, and told him: "We have found the Messiah"--which, by interpretation, means the *Christ*.

42 So Philip brought Shimon to Jesus, and when Jesus saw him, he said: You are Shimon [meaning a *reed*], the son of Jonah. You will be called Cephas [meaning *stone*].

43 The next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip, and told him: Follow me!

44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city Andrew and Peter [Cephas] were from.

45 Philip went and found Nathanael, and told him: We have found the one Moses and the prophets wrote about

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.
 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!
 48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered, and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.¹⁰
 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.
 50 Jesus answered, and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.
 51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.¹¹

in the Scriptures--Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph!
 46 Nathanael wondered in response: Can any good thing come out of a place like Nazareth? Philip said: Come see for yourself!
 47 When they arrived and Jesus saw Nathanael approach, he said about him: Behold! A true Israelite of honesty and integrity!
 48 Nathanael replied: Where do you know me from? Jesus answered: Before Philip called you, when you happened to be under the fig tree, I saw you [in a vision].
 49 Nathanael answered back: Rabbi--you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!
 50 Jesus said in response: Simply because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree you believe in me? You will see much greater things than that before we're done!
 51 Truly, truly, I say to you that hereafter you will see heaven revealed, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man!

1. The word here is *logos*, which is sometimes translated as "Divine expression" in some Bibles. John's apparent use of a Hellenistic term has caused some confusion, for the usage in Greek can refer to the written Scriptures along with terms such as "wisdom" or "utterance." In Hellenism, however, it also embodied a concept of Deity somewhat similar in our culture to what we might call "the Force." That sort of principle was developed in later centuries in Kabbalistic writings dealing with the 10 *Sephiroth*, or 10 emanations proceeding from God which permeate the universe, the highest being "the Word." However, John was not employing a Greek word that expressed his true thoughts, but rather translating a Hebrew word into the closest Greek counterpart despite that counterpart's flawed meaning in Hellenistic culture.
 The actual use of the word is derived from a Hebrew word *memre*. *Memre* means "word," but in Jewish philosophy was far richer than Hellenism's impersonal force that set the universe in motion and sustained it. "The Word" in Hebrew usage embodied the very living essence and being of God through which He created all things. So identifiable is "the Word" with God Himself that an Aramaic *Targum* of Genesis actually says that Adam and Eve heard "the Word of the Lord" walking in the garden! John's usage here, as shown in the last half of the verse, is clearly to affirm that "the Word" was Christ Himself, and that "the Word" is Deity.
2. The great problematic statement for the Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance, who deny the Deity of Christ. Relying upon the fact that the text does not include the word *ho* (the) before the word "God"--which would make Christ the Father--they go on to insert their own indefinite article *a*, making Christ merely "a God." While it is not absolutely impossible to render the verse as they choose to, it is poor grammar at best, and is quickly refuted by John's use of *logos* in the verse (when its Hebrew understanding is acknowledged over the Greek).
3. Better paraphrased as: "And from his fullness, we have received undeserved grace upon grace."
4. An important verse calling into question a popular teaching within Messianic Judaism, which in its zeal to honor the Torah makes no distinction between the Mosaic and Christian covenants. Grace did not necessarily exist in the same way in the Old covenant as it does under the New. True, men were always saved by God's grace, but that grace was limited because of the boundaries of Torah, which demanded obedience and mandated direct punishment for transgression. Under the New covenant, the punishment for transgression has fallen upon Christ on the cross, and thus the measure of God's grace toward man is no longer held back by the limitations of the written Torah, which place humanity under a curse with God's wrath separating man from full fellowship.
5. Some take this verse literally, and believe that any appearances of God in the Old Testament were all pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus. While some undoubtedly were, there seem to be some issues with this notion, as verses like Dan. 7:14, Acts 7:56, and Rev. 5:6 appear to show visions of the Father and Son together, while Moses and the elders (Ex. 24:11) "saw God." John could actually mean that no fallen mortal has ever seen God in His unveiled fullness. But in taking human form, Jesus has now provided a means for God to again interact directly with fallen humanity face-to-face as in the Garden of Eden.
6. Several possible Messiahs were expected by the Jews: The *Messiah ben Joseph*, a "Suffering Messiah" (Gen. 49:22-23); the prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15); and, of course, the *Messiah ben David*, the conquering Messiah. The men here are asking John if he claims to be any of the expected Messiahs, or if he is the Elijah who is to precede the arrival of the *Messiah ben David*. John's denial is probably a Spirit-inspired utterance, for the original Elijah will indeed return before Christ's second coming (Matt. 17:11). John here has come in the spirit and authority of Elijah, and thus, in a sense, he is Elijah, but in a sense is not, for the greater Elijah still has an appointed task ahead.
7. "Sin" is singular but can reasonably be understood as sin in general, or all sin. However, the Spirit may be inspiring John to refer to sin in the singular to teach that Christ atones for all sin by atoning for the one sin of Adam, which all sin springs from as I note on page 20.
8. Andrew, Peter's brother, and probably John.
9. Not necessarily referring to Jesus being the son of Joseph the carpenter, but possibly a reference to the *Messiah ben Joseph*, which Jesus seems to be more akin to than a conquering military Messiah. This Messiah was expected by many to come before the greater *Messiah ben David*.
10. We aren't given enough information to know what Jesus means when He mentions Nathanael being under a fig tree. Jews would sometimes pray under fig trees--the symbol for Israel--and Nathanael, apparently a pious man, may have been praying for the Messiah to come as he sat underneath such a tree. This *Word of Knowledge*--not changing water into wine--is the first recorded miracle of Jesus.
- 11 A reference to Joseph's dream in Gen. 28.

JOHN CHAPTER 2

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee¹; and the mother of Jesus was there:
 2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.
 3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.
 4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman², what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.
 5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.
 6 And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.³
 7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.
 8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast⁴. And they bare it.
 9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,
 10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.
 11 This beginning of miracles⁵ did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.
 12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren⁶, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.
 13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,
 14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:⁷
 15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;
 16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.
 17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.⁸
 18 Then answered the Jews⁹, and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?
 19 Jesus answered, and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I¹⁰ will raise it up.
 20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?¹¹
 21 But he spake of the temple of his body.
 22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.
 23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.
 24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

JOHN CHAPTER 2

1 The third day thereafter, a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus' mother was there.
 2 Jesus, along with his disciples, was invited to it.
 3 When they ran low on wine, Jesus' mother said to him: They have no wine.
 4 Jesus responded: Ma'am--what is that to you and me? My time has not come yet.
 5 But his mother told the servants: Do whatever he tells you to.
 6 Now there were six stone water pots used for Jewish ritual purification of objects, and they held around twenty gallons each.
 7 Jesus ordered the servants: Fill those up with water. So they did, all the way up to the brim.
 8 Then Jesus told them: Go ladle some out and take it to the Levite presiding over the feast. So they brought it to the man.
 9 When the Levite presiding over the feast tasted the wine created out of the water and didn't know where it came from--though the servants knew--he summoned the groom,
 10 And told him: Everyone always puts the best wine out at the beginning of the banquet, and after the guests have drunk their fill, they bring the watered-down wine to finish up with. But you kept the best wine until the end!
 11 This was the first of Jesus' miracles, manifesting his glory, that took place in Cana of Galilee; and the event anchored the disciples' faith in him.
 12 After this, Jesus, his mother, his kinsmen, and his twelve disciples, went down to Capernaum, but remained there for only a few days.
 13 Now the Jewish feast of Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
 14 At the Temple, he found people selling sacrificial oxen, sheep, and doves, along with changing money [--and they were actually disrespecting the Temple by *sitting down* while doing these things!]
 15 After making a whip of ropes, he lashed them all out of the Court of Gentiles, drove out the sheep and oxen, poured out the money-changers' cash boxes, and overturned their tables.
 16 He shouted to the dove sellers: Get these things out of here--don't make my Father's house a place of business!
 17 When he did this, the disciples recalled the Scripture verse, **The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.**
 18 The Judeans answered: Just what sign do you have to give us to show your right to do these things?!
 19 Jesus replied to them: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.
 20 Then the Judeans spat back: It took forty-six years to build this Temple complex, and you'll raise it up in three days, will you?!
 21 But he meant the temple of his body.
 22 So after Jesus had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had told them this, and they believed the Scripture and what Jesus had said [about rising from the dead].
 23 Now when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover, by the time the Day of Sacrifice came, many [placed faith in him as Messiah] when they saw all the miracles he did.
 24 But Jesus did not trust or rely on them, because he knew the truth about every person he met,

25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

25 And did not need anyone to tell him anything about them, for he, himself, already knew what was in the heart of every man.

1. Some believe this was the marriage of John the apostle, although it's unlikely. Since it's said Mary "**was there**," while Jesus was only "**called**," it seems she may have had something to do with the wedding itself, and possibly this means that a relative of Jesus was marrying someone. Some also theorize that the reason they ran out of wine is because Jesus showed up with 12 friends the host hadn't counted on.
2. The term is not as cold in the original language as it is in English. "**Woman**," in this sense, would be a term of honor akin to saying, "Ma'am."
3. Around 8 gallons or possibly around 20; we can't know for sure how the measurement was determined.
4. In all probability, this was a Levite who presided over the ceremony to bless the couple. It was not necessarily a rabbi.
5. It should be noted that changing water into wine is not the first miracle Jesus did, but rather this act and those recorded elsewhere in the Gospels (the miracle with the catch of fish, for instance) are "**the beginning of miracles**"--i.e., the start of His public miracle ministry. By the way, verse 9 uses the word *oinos*, and thus shows that the wine was alcoholic and *not* grape juice as some teach!
6. The "**brethren**" are possibly brothers of Christ, but more likely cousins since at the Crucifixion Jesus gives Mary over to John to take care of.
7. These all sold sacrificial animals and exchanged coinage at an exorbitant rate, the profits of which went to Annas, enabling him to bribe the Romans to keep the office of High Priest in his family. The reason that the vendors are mentioned as "**sitting**" is because it was forbidden to sit in any court other than the Court of Women.
8. An example of John's Gospel jumping forward out of chronological order, for this is actually the second time Jesus drove out the vendors, in the days just prior to the Crucifixion. Although I have yet to find a reference source to substantiate it, tour guides in Israel make the claim that the vendors never returned to the Temple after Christ's cleansing of it.
9. The first example of the word *ioudaioi* arbitrarily being translated as "**Jews**" to make an arbitrary distinction between the followers of Christ and the Jewish people. The word, in this instance, should be translated: "**Judeans**."
10. An important verse showing the nature of equality, and yet distinction, within the triune Godhead. Here, Jesus says that He will raise Himself from the dead, while Peter (Acts 2:24) gives credit for that to God, and Paul (Romans 8:11) gives credit to the Holy Spirit. In the case of Peter and Paul, it is unlikely that either is making a measured theological statement to consciously promote Trinitarian belief, but rather that these were Spirit-inspired declarations bringing forth the mosaic that eventually reveals the triune nature of God.
11. We aren't precisely certain how the elders here are dating the construction of the Temple, and whether they are or are not including two or three years of preparation time prior to actual construction. Assuming they are not, this dates the event to 29 or 30 AD, fitting perfectly with the year of the Crucifixion. Josephus mentions that Herod began the Temple in the 18th year of his reign, and lived for a total of 37 years after being made king by Caesar. Jesus would have been born in his 35th year of reign, and supposing Jesus to be 30 at this time, there would indeed be 46 years between Herod's 18th year of reign and Christ's 30th year upon the earth.

JOHN CHAPTER 3

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler¹ of the Jews:
 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi², we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.
 3 Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?
 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit³, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.⁴
 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.
 9 Nicodemus answered, and said unto him, How can these things be?
 10 Jesus answered, and said unto him, Art thou a master⁵ of Israel, and knowest not these things?
 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye

JOHN CHAPTER 3

1 There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a member of the panel in Jerusalem that interpreted Jewish Law.
 2 He came secretly by night, and told Jesus: Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who comes from God, for no man can do the miracles you do *unless* God is with him!
 3 Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you: Unless a man is born twice, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.
 4 Nicodemus then asked: How can an old man be born twice? Can he climb back into his mother's womb, and be born a second time?
 5 Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you: Unless a man is born both of water *and* Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God!
 6 That which is birthed of flesh is mere flesh. But that which is birthed of the Spirit is spirit.
 7 Don't wonder that I said to you, 'You must be born twice.'
 8 The wind blows where it wants, and you see and hear its effects, but you can't comprehend where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is birthed through the Spirit.
 9 Nicodemus then asked: How can this be the case?
 10 Jesus answered: Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you have no knowledge of the concepts I'm expressing?
 11 Truly, truly, I say to you: We have testified about what we know and have seen, yet none of you accepts our witness.
 12 If I have told you about earthly things and you can't believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly

receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.⁶

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

25 Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews⁷ about purifying.

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

27 John answered, and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.⁸

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.⁹

things?

13 And no man has ascended into heaven but he who came down from heaven--even the Son of Man who is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15 That whosoever will place faith in him will not perish, but have everlasting life!

16 For God so loved humanity that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever places faith in him will not perish, but have everlasting life!

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save the world through him!

18 He who places faith in him is not condemned, but he who does not place faith in him is already condemned, because he did not believe in the person and position of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is what condemns them: That the light came into the world, but men preferred darkness rather than light, as evidenced by the fact that their deeds were evil.

20 For everyone who practices evil hates the light and won't come to it, lest his deeds be shown for what they are [--that they are of Satan].

21 But he who practices truth is drawn to the light so his deeds may be seen for what *they* are: that they are done in God.

22 After these things, Jesus and the disciples went out and encamped in the Judean wilderness, baptizing people there.

23 John was also baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, because there was a lot of water there, and people came there to be baptized.

24 This was before Herod Antipas threw John into a dungeon.

25 Now a question arose between John's disciples and the Judeans about ritual purification [because some were wondering if Jesus' baptism was in conflict with John's].

26 So they came to him, and said: Rabbi--the man who was with you beyond the Jordan, the one you testified about--is baptizing, and the people are all flocking to *him*.

27 John replied: A man can receive nothing [--such as commission to a ministry--] unless it is given by God in heaven.

28 You, yourselves, recall that I denied being the Messiah, but that I was sent on ahead to announce him.

29 It's the groom who possesses the bride, not the best man. But the best man stands at the groom's side and greatly rejoices when he hears the groom's approaching voice. Thus, I rejoice in this.

30 [And, like the best man, I now step aside, having played my role.] He must grow greater, and I must now recede into the background.

31 He who came from heaven above is above everything. But I, who am of the earth, am nothing more than a man, and can only speak the limited revelations *of* a man. He who is from heaven outranks everything and everyone [and his revelations and understanding are far greater than my own].

32 And what he has seen and heard [in heaven], he testifies to, but no man accepts what he is testifying about.

33 But anyone who receives his message has made a declaration that he agrees that God is true,

34 For he whom God has sent speaks the very words of God Himself, for God has given him an unlimited amount

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.
36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.¹⁰

of wisdom of the Spirit.
35 The Father loves the Son, and has given control of everything to him.
36 He who places faith in the Son has everlasting life, but he who does not place faith in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God will remain upon him!

1. Nicodemus (*Nakdimon* in Hebrew), from the language used about him, appears to have held a high position within Jerusalem. He may well have been a member of the *Beit Din*, a three-judge tribunal of men who were masters of rabbinic law. Their task was to judge local matters of a religious nature, passing issues of special difficulty on to the Sanhedrin for a final determination.
2. Nicodemus' use of the word *rabbi* shows that he has already accepted that Jesus is the Messiah, or at least a true prophet, for no judge of Israel would use the word *rabbi* to one of lesser status as the word, in this instance, is an indication of submission.
3. Better translated as: "Unless a man be born of water and spirit." (See Ezekiel 30.)
4. Jesus is not inventing the evangelical term *Born Again*! The term was well known to Judaism, and referred to the status of a new convert who had repented from sin and come under covenant with God. What Nicodemus fails to comprehend is that he must put aside the philosophies and religious training he has grown up with, and begin to think an entirely new way with respect to sin and justification, making a transition from a Pharisaic to a Christian worldview, and through that to gain eternal life. Also, Jesus' words are often translated as being "born from above," which technically can be rendered in that way. However, Nicodemus' reply in verse 4 shows that "Born Again" is a better understanding of Jesus' words, as is Peter's using the term in 1st Peter 1:23.
5. Better translated as: "Teacher."
6. Here is the great illustration of salvation Jesus gives which so many denominations fail to grasp: Reconciliation to God comes through nothing more difficult than for a man to look back to the Crucifixion with faith. As shown in Numbers 21, those who were dying from the bite of the serpents had only to look at the serpent upon the pole to live--not look to the serpent *and* be baptized...not look at the serpent *and* obey commandments...not look at the serpent *and* perform meritorious works. They simply were to look, and believe the word that they would be saved by looking to the serpent on the pole! The fact that Jesus Himself acknowledges the tie-in with the brazen serpent upon the pole--the very symbol of sin and the devil--reveals the false teaching of some who deny or redefine in a 180-degree manner Paul's own words that Christ was "made to be sin" on the cross. Those who think there was only purity on all possible levels of the cross clearly miss the point of Jesus' own illustration, and Paul's words in 2 Cor. 5:21.
7. Absolutely should be translated "Judeans," for indeed there were disputes between the Pharisees of Judea and regions like Galilee over extraneous ritual washings and the like.
8. Words true for all of us, for only if we decrease our own will can Christ's will increase in our lives.
9. Better paraphrased as: "For he whom God has sent teaches the mysteries of God, for God has given him an unlimited amount of wisdom of the Spirit."
10. A sobering warning to some people who mistakenly believe that somehow "good" people who never hear the Gospel message, or else sincerely reject it in favor of heartfelt commitment to Islam, Judaism, or what have you, can obtain eternal life without conscious faith in Christ's atonement. There simply is *no other way*! The exception would be those who die before they know right from wrong (Deut. 1:39), and probably those who for some reason are incapable of knowing right from wrong, or making a decision for or against Christ. These may reach heaven, but without a reward; or they may be resurrected at the Millennium to live out their lives on earth, making the choice for or against Christ they could not make in their first life. The Bible doesn't say for certain.

JOHN CHAPTER 4

1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,
2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)
3 He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.
4 And he must needs go through Samaria.¹
5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.
6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.
7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.
8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)²
9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.³
10 Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he

JOHN CHAPTER 4

1 When the Lord came to know that the Pharisees were aware that he was baptizing more disciples than John--
2 Though Jesus did not do the baptizing, the disciples did--
3 He left Judea, and returned once more to Galilee.
4 But he was prompted, and so chose, to pass through Samaria to reach his destination.
5 On the way, Jesus came to a city in Samaria called Sychar, which is near the parcel of land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.
6 Now Jacob's well was there, and Jesus--being exhausted from the long walk--sat on it to rest. It was about [noon].
7 It happened that a Samaritan woman came out to draw water from the well, and Jesus told her: Give me a drink of water.
8 His disciples, you see, had gone into town to buy meat.
9 Then the Samaritan woman said: How is it that you--a Jew--ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink, seeing that you Jews won't even drink out of the same cups we use?
10 Jesus answered back: If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that's asking "Give me a drink of water," you would have asked *him* for water, and he would give you the *real* living water!

would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered, and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered, and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.⁴

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.⁵

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.⁶

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.⁷

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman⁸: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

28 The woman then left her water pot⁹, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?¹⁰ Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth

11 The woman said: Sir--the water down in the well is too deep to reach without a rope and bucket, so how could you have any living water to give me?

12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it along with his children and livestock? [Even *he* needed a rope and bucket.]

13 Jesus answered: Whoever drinks the water down in that well will get thirsty again.

14 But whoever drinks the living water *I* offer will never ever thirst again. The living water *I* give shall be a wellspring inside him that springs forth to everlasting life.

15 The woman then said: Sir, then give me this water so I never thirst again, and won't have to walk all the way out here for water!

16 Jesus answered: Go get your husband, then return.

17 To this, the woman replied: I have no husband. Jesus said back: You've answered well to say you have no husband.

18 You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now isn't married to you, so you've spoken truthfully.

19 The woman now said: Sir, I realize you must be a prophet!

20 Now tell me--our fathers worshipped God in the temple here, at Mount Gerazim, but you Jews say Jerusalem is the place to worship God. [Which is right, or does it make a difference?]

21 Jesus said in response: Woman, believe me--the time is coming when whether you worship the Father at Mount Gerazim or Jerusalem will be irrelevant.

22 But more importantly, you Samaritans worship a God you don't really know, while we Jews know Whom we worship, for salvation comes from us.

23 But the time is coming, and now is beginning, when the true worshippers of the Father will worship Him in spirit and in truth, for those are the sorts of worshippers the Father wants. [Thus, *where* you worship God is irrelevant, for the place to worship God is in your heart.]

24 For God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

25 Then the woman then said to him: I know that the Messiah is coming--the one they call Christ--and when he does, he will tell us everything we have to do.

26 Jesus said to her: I, who speak to you, *am* the Messiah!

27 About this time, the disciples returned and were amazed to see that he was talking with a Samaritan woman, of all things. But none of them asked her, "What do you want?" or asked Jesus, "Why are you talking to her?"

28 The woman, meanwhile, actually left her rope and bucket, and ran back into town where she found the townsmen, whom she told:

29 Come see a man who told me all then things I ever did! Is this not the Messiah?!

30 So [out of curiosity] they came out of the city, and followed her back to the well where Jesus was.

31 Meantime, the disciples encouraged Jesus, saying: Rabbi, eat something.

32 But he said: I have food to eat that you don't know about.

33 Therefore, they asked one another: Did someone else

fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his own word;¹¹

42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.

45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52 Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.

bring him some food to eat?

34 Jesus said: My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish the work He gave me to do.

35 Isn't there a saying, *In four months comes the harvest?* I tell you, lift up your eyes and look upon the fields, for the harvest is ripened and ready even now!

36 [The wages of both the sower and the reaper is the harvest of souls who will gain eternal life--and both can rejoice together with the same pay.]

37 It's a true saying that, *One plants/another harvests.*

38 I sent you to reap a harvest you had no part in planting. It was others, who came before you, that did the planting, and you are now doing your part in continuing and being blessed by their past labors.

39 Now many of the Samaritans of that town placed faith in Jesus because of what the woman had told them:

"Come see a man who told me all I ever did."

40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they begged him to stay in Sychar, so Jesus remained there for two days.

41 And many more placed faith in Jesus because of the teachings they heard from his own mouth,

42 And they told the woman: Now we believe, not because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves, and we realize this *is* the Christ, the savior of the world!

43 After the two days, Jesus went on to Galilee.

44 Jesus himself had said, "A prophet receives no honor in his own country."

45 But when he arrived in Galilee, the people received him, having seen the things he had done at the Feast, because they had been there as well.

46 Jesus eventually returned to Cana of Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain nobleman from Capernaum whose son was deathly ill.

47 When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judaea, he found him and begged him to come back and heal his son who was at the point of death.

48 Jesus said to him: Except you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will not believe.

49 The nobleman begged him, saying: Sir--please come back with me before my child dies!

50 Jesus replied: Go home--your son lives. So the man believed what Jesus told him, and went back home.

51 As he was on the way back, his servants met him, and announced: Your son is alive and well!

52 Then the nobleman asked what time his son began to improve, and they told him it was around [1 PM].

53 So the nobleman realized it was at the same time Jesus had told him, "Your son lives." And he and his entire household believed in Jesus.

54 This was the second miracle Jesus did when he was in Galilee, having returned from Judaea.

1. Traveling through Samaria, according to Josephus, was the quickest way to get from Jerusalem to Galilee, and was a three-day trip of about twelve miles per day.

2. They probably went themselves into the city, leaving Jesus at the well because they considered Him too good to defile Himself by entering a Samaritan village.

3. The poor woman in this, one of the most magnificent tales of Christ's ministry, is almost always accused of trying to deflect attention away from her sin by throwing out a theological question. In actuality, her legitimate question--and Jesus' direct answer which never again brings up her sin--suggests to me she honestly took advantage of the opportunity to ask a prophet something that had been debated for centuries. It should also be noted that this woman is the first person noted in the Gospels to whom Jesus clearly, and unequivocally, reveals He is the Messiah. By the way, she actually says something akin to, "**We don't use the same dishes.**" not, "**The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.**" There was, you see, mutual hatred between Jew and Samaritan.

with the Jews treating the Samaritans as half-breeds, and the Samaritans hating the Judeans for the burning of their temple by John Hyrcanus. The Mishna, by the way, shows Jewish contempt for Samaritans by equating Samaritan bread with pork. Sychar is within view of Mt. Gerazim, where the Samaritans had their rival temple to that of Jerusalem, and this well was several hundred yards out of town, confirming that the woman was undoubtedly somewhat of an outcast with respect to the other local women since she traveled that far for water. The well is particularly beautiful, being deep and fed by cool underground streams. Since the waters *are* spring-fed, they were known as *mayim chaim*, or “living waters” even in the time of Jesus—who used this term in his sermon.

As a point of interest, the Samaritans of today claim to possess an ancient Torah scroll written by Abisha, the great-grandson of Aaron.

4. A statement all too often passed over by some in the Messianic movement who cling a bit too tightly to the notion that God wants all Christians to worship Him in the manner the Jews do.
5. An important verse showing that the Jews of Christ’s time—despite problems with some of the religious movements—indeed knew the One True God.
6. As did the Jews, the Samaritans expected a Messiah to come—known as the *Taheb*--and restore some of the sacred vessels of the first tabernacle, and to teach them the ways of righteousness.
7. Jesus’ first recorded affirmation that He is the Messiah.
8. Because, in the culture, it is next to unthinkable for a man to be speaking in public with a woman—even his wife or sister!
9. John illustrates her great level of excitement by mentioning her leaving the water pot, for a bucket/water pot and rope was quite a valuable—and necessary—commodity in that part of the ancient world, and no person would normally let it out of his sight.
10. Harvest time was around April or May, showing this event happens in December. There is no evidence, although it is suspected, that Jesus is quoting a saying of the time.
11. It is noteworthy that this is the only recorded mission of Christ in which He reaps a harvest of souls by doing no miracles, and using only preaching. As a point of interest, an ancient sect of Christians called *Dositheans*, after their founder Dositheus, an early disciple of John the Baptist, lived in Samaria. Dositheus is thought by some to have been one of the original 70 disciples of Christ. The Christians of Samaria, however, seem to have quickly drifted into heresy, teaching that Jesus was the reincarnation of Seth. Simon Magus, of Acts 8 fame, was supposedly a disciple of Dositheus.

JOHN CHAPTER 5

- 1 After this there was a feast of the Jews¹; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
- 2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.
- 3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.
- 4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.²
- 5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.
- 6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?³
- 7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.
- 8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.
- 9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.
- 10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.⁴
- 11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.
- 12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?
- 13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.
- 14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said

JOHN CHAPTER 5

- 1 After this, Jesus returned to Jerusalem during another Passover.
- 2 Now at Jerusalem is a spring with five porches called in Hebrew *Bethesda* [meaning House of Mercy], which is down by the sheep market.
- 3 In the porches lay a great crowd of sick and infirmed people waiting for the water to be disturbed.
- 4 [For every so often, an angel would go down and disturb the water, and whoever stepped in first would be healed of whatever ailments he had.]
- 5 A certain cripple was there who had been in that state for thirty-eight years.
- 6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and came to understand he had been crippled for that many years, he asked: Do you want to be made whole?
- 7 The cripple answered: Sir, I have no one who can lift me into the spring when the water is stirred up--someone always steps in before me!
- 8 Jesus told him: Rise, pick up your mat, and walk!
- 9 And immediately the man was healed, took up his mat, and began walking home. This happened to be done on a Sabbath.
- 10 Some Judeans spotted him, and said: This is the Sabbath--you’re violating the Law by carrying the burden of a mat!
- 11 But the man answered back: The man who healed me told me to pick up my mat, and walk.
- 12 So they demanded to know: Who told you that?!
- 13 But the man who had been healed couldn’t show them, for Jesus had left the area due to the large crowd that had gathered.
- 14 Jesus later spotted him in one of the Temple courts and came up to him, saying: You are made whole now--sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you!
- 15 Then the man went out, and told the Judeans that Jesus was the one who had restored his limbs to full strength.

unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.⁵

16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.⁶

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.⁷

19 Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

20 For the Father loveth⁸ the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.⁹ He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.¹⁰

32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

16 Therefore, the Judeans persecuted Jesus and wanted to slay him for doing things like this on the Sabbath.

17 But Jesus told them: My Father works [--doing good on the Sabbath--] and so do I!

18 That statement made the Judeans seek to kill him all the more, for not only had Jesus broken the Sabbath, but he also called God his Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Then Jesus added: Truly, truly, I say to you: The Son can do nothing on his own--only what he sees the Father do! Thus, the things the Father does, the Son does likewise!

20 For the Father is very fond of the Son, and shows him all the things He does, and will show him even greater things--things that will amaze you.

21 For as the Father raises and gives life to the dead, even so the Son will give [eternal] life to whomever *he* chooses.

22 For the Father judges no man, but has given the right to pass judgment to the Son,

23 So that all men may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him!

24 Truly, truly, I tell you: He who hears my Message and believes on Him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not face condemnation, but has made the transition from death to life.

25 Truly, truly, I tell you: The time is coming, and is now starting, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and the ones who hear it will live.

26 For as the Father is the source of life, so He has enabled the Son to also be a source of life,

27 And has given him the authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man [--the *bar Enash* Daniel prophesied of]!

28 Don't be shocked by this, for the time is coming in which all who are in the grave will hear his voice,

29 And will come out. Those who have done good will come out to enter the resurrection of life, while those who did evil will come out to the resurrection of damnation!

30 I can't do anything of my own volition. As God tells me, I judge--and my judgment is fair, because I am not seeking my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me.

31 If I testify on my own behalf [for my own glory], I am a fraud.

32 There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know his testimony of me is true. [That person is John.]

33 You sent inquisitors to John, and he testified about the truth.

34 But the only testimony that matters to me is not from man [but from God]. Even so, I boast of John's testimony for *your* own good, that you might be saved.

35 John was a bright and shining light, and for a short time you were willing to rejoice in his light [until you realized he wouldn't dance to your tune].

36 But I have a greater testimony than John: the miracles my Father has given me to accomplish. These miracles testify that I haven't come on my own, but that the Father sent me.

37 And the Father Himself, who did send me, has testified about me. But *you* have never heard His voice, nor ever seen Him in person [as I have].

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.
 38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.
 39 Search the scriptures¹¹; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.
 40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.
 41 I receive not honour from men.
 42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.
 43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.¹²
 44 How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?
 45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.
 46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.
 47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

38 Nor does His Word live in your hearts, because you don't believe the one He has sent to you.
 39 You constantly study the Scriptures, for you think they will lead you to eternal life, and those very Scriptures tell you about *me*.
 40 Yet you will not come to me in order to *have* true life.
 41 I don't say that because I seek honor from men,
 42 But because I know you don't have the love of God dwelling in your hearts!
 43 I have come in my Father's name, and you reject me. [Someday,] one will come in his own name, and him you'll eagerly accept.
 44 How can you believe in the first place, when you crave the approval of each other instead of the approval of God alone?
 45 Don't think I will be the one bringing accusations against you to the Father. The one who will do that is Moses, in whom you trust!
 46 For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me as well, because Moses wrote [and prophesied] about me.
 47 But if you won't believe *his* writings, how can you believe what *I* tell you?

1. Probably Passover.

2. Verse 4 is not in the oldest manuscripts and does not appear in any Gospel texts until the 5th century, although Tertullian (*On Baptism*, chap. 5) seems to have been aware of it in the 2nd century. Likewise, the 2nd century *Diatesseron* records it.

3. Possibly better paraphrased as: "*Do you really want to get well?*" Some believe the man had just given up and sunk into an attitude of despair.

4. David Stern believes that to carry one's mat within the confines of Jerusalem on the Sabbath would have technically been lawful, but assuming the man lived outside the city he would have been breaking rabbinic law to leave the gates with the mat in his hands, and thus he may have been stopped by the elders at the city gates, and warned. It is equally likely these were simply some of the more strict Shammaites, rebuking him for carrying a burden on the Sabbath.

5. Showing these were indeed elders who had questioned the act--and we can only imagine what greater bane fell upon this fool in the following days after he betrayed Jesus to them.

6. Stern suggests that Jesus is pointing out that God "**works**" on the Sabbath (by maintaining the earth, and even by causing the human body to heal normally, even though it is a Sabbath), and so the Son is equally expected to.

7. Jesus has just equated Himself with God by declaring that *He* can do the "**work**" of healing on the Sabbath, which otherwise the Shammaites forbid to ordinary men who are commanded to rest.

8. An interesting use of the word *phileo*, the intimate love of friendship, rather than *agape*, the typical word for selfless, sacrificing, spiritual love for others. Were Jesus speaking in our vernacular, he might actually say something along the lines of, "God doesn't just love me--He actually *likes* me!"

9. This statement is utter blasphemy to a Jewish mind, suggesting that *any* man--even the Messiah--is to be honored as God is honored. The natural understanding of Christ's words is that He is revealing His divinity, for otherwise the elders are perfectly correct: God does not share His glory with man.

10. Better paraphrased as: "*If I'm doing my works to promote my own glory rather than God's, I am a fraud.*"

11. Better understood as: "*You constantly study the Scriptures, for you think they will lead you to eternal life, and those very Scriptures tell you about me. Yet you will not come to me in order to have true life.*"

12. Thought by some to be a prophetic reference to the coming Antichrist.

JOHN CHAPTER 6

1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberius.
 2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.
 3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.
 4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.
 5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?
 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew

JOHN CHAPTER 6

1 After these events, Jesus sailed across the Sea of Galilee, which is called the Sea of Tiberius by the Romans.
 2 And a great multitude of people followed him because of all the miracles they had seen him perform on the diseased.
 3 Meanwhile, Jesus went up onto a mountain, and sat down there with his disciples.
 4 This was when the Jewish Feast of Passover was at hand.
 5 When Jesus looked up and saw what a great crowd was gathering, he asked Philip: Where will we ever buy

what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth¹ of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad² here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.³

16 And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.

20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.

21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

22 The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone;

23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberius nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?

26 Jesus answered them, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for

enough bread to feed all these people?

6 But he said this to test Philip's faith, because he knew what he had in mind.

7 Philip answered: Six months' wages wouldn't buy enough bread for everyone in this mob to take one bite!

8 Now one of Jesus' other disciples, Andrew, the brother of Shimon Peter, spoke up, and said:

9 There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and a pair of small pickled fish—but what good is that among so many?

10 But Jesus said: Make the men sit down. Now it was a very grassy area so the men, who numbered five thousand, sat down as ordered.

11 Then Jesus took the barley loaves, and when he had given thanks to God, he broke them up and distributed them to the disciples who then distributed them to the people. He did that with the fish as well, giving the people as much as they wanted.

12 When everyone was full, he told the disciples: Gather up the leftovers so nothing is lost.

13 They did this, and filled twelve baskets with leftover bread from the five barley loaves they'd eaten from

14 Then, when the men in the crowd saw this miracle of Jesus, they said: Surely this is the prophet Moses said would come into the world!

15 When Jesus concluded they would try to take him by force and make him a king, he left the area and went alone to a mountain.

16 That evening, the disciples went down to the sea of Galilee,

17 And entered a boat with the intention of sailing to Capernaum. Now it became dark, and Jesus still had not returned to them,

18 And then the lake was hit by a tremendous windstorm, whipping the water into a maelstrom.

19 So when they had rowed several miles in the face of the storm, they saw Jesus walking atop the sea, making his way toward them, and they were terrified.

20 But he called out to them: It's I—don't be afraid!

21 Then they let him board, and the boat immediately arrived at its destination.

22 The next day, the crowds on other side of the lake saw only one small boat on shore after Jesus' disciples had sailed off. They knew that Jesus hadn't departed with them, but that the disciples had left by themselves.

23 Meanwhile, word of the miracle had spread to Tiberius, and boatloads of people began arriving near the place where the Lord had performed the miracle of the loaves after giving thanks.

24 When the people on shore saw that neither Jesus nor the disciples were there, they took to the boats and sailed over to Capernaum, hoping to find him.

25 When they found him there on the other side of the sea, they said: Rabbi, when did you come here?

26 Jesus answered, and said: Truly, truly, I tell you: You're not looking for me because you saw miracles [and believed in who I am]—you're only here because you ate the loaves I fed you with!

27 Don't seek for the meat that is here today, and gone tomorrow—seek for the meat leading to eternal life that the Son of Man will give you, for God the Father has ordained him to that task, and placed His seal of approval on him!

that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?⁴

29 Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

43 Jesus therefore answered, and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves,

28 [Frustrated,] the crowd then asked: Well, then what must *we* do to be able to perform miracle works of God [like *you* do]?

29 Jesus responded: The foundation for that is to place faith in the one who was sent by Him.

30 They therefore replied: Then what sign do you have to show us so we can see it, and place faith *in* you? What deed will you do?

31 Our ancestors received manna to eat in the desert. The Scripture says, *He gave them bread from heaven to eat*. [Since you want us to follow you, is it not reasonable--even Scriptural--for you to do the same for us as well?]

32 Then Jesus said to them: Truly, truly, I tell you:

Moses didn't give you that bread from heaven; but my Father gives you the *true* bread from heaven!

33 For the true bread of God is he who came down from heaven and gives life to the world.

34 Then they said to him: Lord, forever give us this bread you speak of.

35 Jesus' reply was: *I* am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never hunger; and he who places faith in me will never thirst either!

36 But as I said, you do not believe, even though you have seen me.

37 All whom the father gives me shall find their way to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out!

38 For I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.

39 And this is the will of the Father who sent me: That of all He has given me, I shall lose none, but will raise them up on the last day.

40 And this too is the will of the Father who sent me:

That everyone who sees and believes on the Son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

41 Then the Judeans murmured at him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

42 And they said: Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? Then how can he claim, 'I came down from heaven'?

43 Jesus then answered the crowd: Stop murmuring amongst yourselves.

44 No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him to me, and I will raise him up on the last day.

45 It is written in the scrolls of the prophets, **And they shall be all taught of God**. Thus, every man who has heard and been taught by the Father will come to me.

46 Not that any mortal man has ever seen the Father, except him who is of God--*he* has seen the Father!

47 Truly, truly, I tell you: He who believes on me has everlasting life!

48 I am the bread of life!

49 The bread you spoke of in the wilderness? Your ancestors ate that manna, and they are all dead.

50 But I am the bread that came down from heaven, which a man can eat and never die!

51 For I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If any man eats this bread, he will live forever, and the bread I give is my flesh, which I will offer up to give life to the world.

52 Hearing this, the Judeans argued amongst themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?
 53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.
 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.
 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.
 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.
 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.
 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.
 59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.
 60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?
 61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?
 62 What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?
 63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.⁵
 64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.
 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.
 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.⁶
 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?
 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.
 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.
 70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?
 71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

53 Then Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I tell you: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you will have no life in you.
 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day!
 55 For indeed, my flesh is meat, and my blood is drink.
 56 He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him.
 57 As the living Father has sent me, and as I live by the Father, so he who consumes me will live by me!
 58 So then, *I* am the bread that came down from heaven—not the manna your ancestors ate, all of whom are now dead! The bread I am will give eternal life to whoever eats it!
 59 These things Jesus said as he taught in the synagogue in Capernaum.
 60 Many of his disciples, when they heard all this, said to each other: This makes no sense. Who can understand what he means?
 61 When Jesus perceived that his disciples murmured at his words, he said to them: Are *these* words a stumbling block for you?
 62 What if you were to see the Son of Man ascend back to where he was before?
 63 It is the Spirit that gives life, and man's efforts [to find life on his own, through efforts of his own] are pointless! The teachings I impart to you are [revelation], and they are life.
 64 But there are some of you here who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who did not truly believe, and who would betray him.
 65 Jesus concluded: This is why I said to you that no man can come to me unless the Father enables him to.
 66 From that point, many of Jesus' disciples returned home, and no longer followed him.
 67 Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you leave as well?
 68 Then Shimon Peter answered: Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the teachings of eternal life.
 69 And we are absolutely convinced, and believe, that you are the Messiah, Son of the Living God!
 70 Jesus told them: Have I not chosen you twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?
 71 He was referring to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, who was one of the twelve, and the one who would betray him.

1. Months' worth of a workman's daily wages.

2. Probably young John Mark who, with Barnabas and perhaps other relatives, followed Jesus about at times.

3. Jesus refuses their overtures to make Him king because it is God who has appointed the time of His coronation, and also because they wish to make Him king only because their needs were being met. (See verse 26.)

4. Most theologians understand the people to be asking, "What must we do, so we can do the things God wants us to?" However, the people are actually frustrated at Jesus' rebuke, and are asking what they need to do in order to perform supernatural works for themselves since Jesus isn't cooperating. Unlike other Gospel writers, the word for "**works**" (*ergon*) is repeatedly used by John (25 times compared to 5/2 and 2 in the other Gospels) in context of both normal *and* supernatural deeds, while the other writers tend to limit it to normal deeds, and so rarely use the word. As we see from the context of both Jesus' words and what happens by the end of the chapter, the people absolutely *do not* (verse 36) believe in Him. Thus, they cannot be speaking in humility and asking how they might please God—but instead are asking what they need to do in order to work the sort of miracles they've seen Jesus do. Jesus gives them a straight answer despite their attitude, but their attitude causes them to reject Him by the end of the chapter.

5. Jesus' words here make no real sense to a Western mind. Saying, "My words are spirit," is as non sequitur as saying, "My words are grapefruit." Because of this, theologians faced with this puzzling remark, and no frame of reference for it, typically default to the Holy Spirit, and assume Jesus must be saying that His words are anointed by the Spirit, come from the Spirit, or something along those lines. However, Jesus did not say anything of the sort. He said His words "**are spirit**"! A westerner can't comprehend that statement, but an Eastern listener could understand that Jesus is making a word play by using the word *spirit* in one of its Eastern meanings apart from the *Holy* Spirit: that of a *revelation*! Thus, they could view Jesus saying that He is giving them a revelation of

the way to eternal life through a word play, using the word “spirit” to refer both to the *Holy Spirit*, and the revelations coming from mouth of the Son of God.

6. Jesus had a habit of offending people’s minds to reveal what was in their hearts. Verses like 53-56, alluding to eating flesh and drinking blood were absolutely blasphemous in the minds of observant Jews, for the Torah forbids both. It would be akin to walking into a strict Holiness church of today, and announcing that only those who commit fornication and adultery can be saved. For whatever reason Christ chose to work in this manner, His calculated sayings to offend the mind caused those who were not truly His to fall away.

JOHN CHAPTER 7

1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.¹

2 Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand.

3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.

5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.

7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast: for my time is not yet full come.

9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

11 Then the Jews² sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?

12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.

13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

20 The people answered, and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

21 Jesus answered, and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge

JOHN CHAPTER 7

1 After these events, Jesus traveled about Galilee, but would not go into Judea because the Judeans wanted to kill him.

2 Now the Jewish Festival of *Sukkot* [Tabernacles] was at hand.

3 Jesus’ kinsmen thus told him: Go back to Judea, and let your disciples there see the same miracles you’re doing here.

4 No man makes a name for himself by staying hidden. If you can do all these miraculous things, don’t do them in secret—do them openly, for the whole world to see!

5 For his kinsmen didn’t believe in him either.

6 Jesus answered: My time is not yet come, but any time is a good time for *you*!

7 The world has no reason to hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its whole system is evil.

8 If *you* want to go to the Feast, then go! I’m not ready to go because my time isn’t fully come yet.

9 After saying this, Jesus remained in Galilee for a time.

10 But after his kinsmen had gone up, he subsequently followed, but he did so in secret.

11 Now the Judeans looked for him amongst the crowd assembled for the Feast, and they wondered: Where is he?

12 And there was a great debate among the people with some saying, “He is a good man,” while others said, “No, he’s deceiving the people!”

13 But no one voiced their opinion loudly, because they were afraid of saying something that would offend the [Judean religious leaders].

14 Now during the middle part of the Feast, Jesus went into the Temple courts and taught the people.

15 And the Judeans marveled, saying: How did this man learn to read and teach the Scriptures, seeing as he has never been trained by any *yeshiva*?

16 Jesus answered them: This is not my doctrine—it is the doctrine of Him who sent me.

17 If any man does His will, he will know if the doctrines I teach are of myself, or of God.

18 He who preaches his own doctrine seeks his own glory. He who seeks the glory of the One who sent him is sincere and guiltless.

19 Didn’t Moses give you the Torah, yet none of you keep it? Why are you plotting to kill me?

20 The crowd [of leaders] answered: You have a demon! Who here is plotting to kill you?

21 Jesus replied: I did one miracle on the Sabbath, and you all were amazed I would do such a thing on that day.

22 Now Moses gave you the laws about circumcision—though it came down from the Patriarchs first, of course—and you have no problem breaking the law of Resting by circumcising an infant on the Sabbath yourselves.

23 So if you agree it is permissible to work on the

righteous judgment.

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

29 But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast³, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)⁴

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet.

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43 So there was a division among the people because of him.

44 And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

49 But this people who knoweth not the law are

Sabbath by doing a physical operation of circumcision, why would you be angry that I had made a sick man completely whole on the Sabbath?

24 Judge not according to outward appearance, but judge righteously!

25 Then some residents of Jerusalem said: Isn't this the man they want to kill?

26 But look—he speaks boldly, in their faces, and they can't respond. Do the elders actually know he is the Messiah?

27 The strange thing is, we know where this man comes from, but won't the Messiah arrive out of nowhere?

28 Then Jesus cried out to the crowd in the Temple courtyard as he taught: You may know me and where I come from, yet I did not come on my own, but the One who sent me is true—and you don't know *Him*!

29 But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent me!

30 Then the elders sought to take him into custody, but no one could because his hour had not yet arrived.

31 And many people believed in him, saying: [If he's not the Messiah,] when the Messiah *does* come, will he do more miracles than this man?

32 When the Pharisees heard the people saying such things, they and the chief Sadducee priests assigned some Temple officers to take him.

33 Jesus said to them: I will be with you only for a little while longer, and then I will go to Him who sent me.

34 You will seek me, but not find me, for where I am you cannot come.

35 The Judeans said among themselves: Where will he go that we can't find him? Does he mean he'll go to the Jews dispersed abroad, and teach the Gentiles?

36 What kind of saying is this, 'You will seek me, but not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?

37 In the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood forth, and shouted out: If any man is thirsty—let him come to *me*, and drink!

38 He who places faith in me, as the Scripture says, **Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.**

39 Jesus here was referring to the Spirit of God, which those who placed faith in him would receive, for the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to man because Jesus had not been glorified yet.

40 Many of those present, when they heard him speak these words, said: This man is certainly the Prophet Moses spoke about!

41 Others said: This is the Messiah! But some wondered: Will the Messiah come out of Galilee?

42 Hasn't the Scripture prophesied that the Messiah will come from David's line, out of Bethlehem where David was from?

43 So the people were divided over him.

44 Some still wanted to take him into custody, but no man laid hands on him.

45 Then the officers ordered to apprehend Jesus returned to the chief Sadducee priests and Pharisees who had sent them. They were asked: Why haven't you brought him in?

46 They replied: No man ever spoke like this man!

47 Then the Pharisees who were present said: Are you deceived too?

48 Have any of the elders of Israel, or any of the schools of the Pharisees believed on him?

cursed.
 50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)
 51 Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?
 52 They answered, and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.⁵
 53 And every man went unto his own house.

49 [Only these common people have,] who don't know the Torah, and are cursed by God!
 50 Nicodemus, the one who had come to Jesus by night, replied:
 51 Does our Torah judge any man before he has a chance to defend himself?
 52 They answered: Are you a Galilean too? Search the Scriptures--no prophet is prophesied to come out of Galilee!
 53 After this, everyone went back home.

1. Should be translated: "For he would not walk in Judea because the Judeans sought to kill him."

2. Should be translated: "Judeans."

3. This is the culmination of the Feast of *Sukkot* (Tabernacles), during which water and wine are mixed together by the High Priest, and verses from the Old Testament dealing with water are spoken. Jesus probably shouted out His famous statement, "come unto me, and drink" as the High Priest said prayers for rain. As a point of interest, during this Festival a series of golden lamps were set up in the Court of Women, the wicks of which were made from the swaddling cloths of the priests. The lamps were known as the *Lights of the World*. It is also during the seven days of this Feast that a total of 70 bulls were sacrificed to atone for the sins of the Gentiles. This is important to note because Judaism today asserts that sacrifice cannot atone for intentional sin, but only for unintentional sin. Since the 70 bulls were sacrificed for the Gentile nations that obviously were *not* in a state of repentance, we can see that the notion is a false one. (For those interested, the Talmud solves the problem of how a Jew who commits an intentional sin obtains forgiveness by claiming that repentance moves the category of sin from *willful* to *unintentional* in God's eyes.)

4. This is an important verse to contradict the theology of some who present an unbiblical teaching that the Holy Spirit has always indwelt the people of God. In point of fact, the Holy Spirit *did not* indwell believers until after the Crucifixion and the subsequent events of Acts 2. Thus, using David's words imploring God not to take the Holy Spirit from him is no evidence whatever contradicting the notion of a "second blessing" of the Holy Spirit available to believers. It is true that the Holy Spirit fell upon and anointed some of the men and women of God in prior ages, but there is a distinct difference between the pre-Christianity fellowship of the Spirit, and the literal indwelling and release of the Spirit available after the Crucifixion.

5. They are almost certainly meaning that there is no prophecy of a prophet to *arise* from Galilee, for they cannot have been unaware that Jonah was a Galilean.

JOHN CHAPTER 8

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.
 2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.
 3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,¹
 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.
 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?
 6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.²
 7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.
 8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.
 9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.
 10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?
 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.
 12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.
 13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou

JOHN CHAPTER 8

1 Jesus now went to the Mount of Olives.
 2 Early the next morning, he returned to the Temple, the throng of people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.
 3 As he was doing this, the Torah teachers and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught committing adultery. When they made her stand forth with them,
 4 They said to Jesus: Rabbi--this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery!
 5 Moses, in the Torah, commanded us to stone women like her. But what do *you* say?
 6 They said this to try to trick Jesus and get something to use against him. But Jesus simply stooped down, and with a finger began writing in the dust on the ground as though he hadn't heard them.
 7 When they pressed the point, he stood up, and said: Fine--let whichever of you who has never committed [the same] sin cast the first stone at her.
 8 Then he bent down, and began to write again.
 9 Those who heard his statement, being convicted by their consciences, now began drifting away, one by one, starting with the oldest, down to the youngest. Finally, the woman was left behind with the crowd that had assembled to hear Jesus preach.
 10 When Jesus stood up and saw the woman left alone, he said: Woman, where are the ones who accused you? Has no one condemned you?
 11 She said: No one, Lord. And Jesus replied: Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.
 12 Then Jesus proclaimed to everyone: I am the light of the world! He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life!
 13 The Pharisees thus said to him: You're testifying about

bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.
 14 Jesus answered, and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.
 15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.
 16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.
 17 It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.
 18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.
 19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.
 20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury³, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.
 21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins:⁴ whither I go, ye cannot come.
 22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.
 23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.
 24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.
 25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.
 26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.
 27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.
 28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.
 29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.
 30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.
 31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
 33 They⁵ answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?
 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.
 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.
 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.
 37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.
 38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father:

yourself, so your testimony is not true!
 14 Jesus replied: Even though I testify about myself, my testimony is *still* true, because I know where I came from, and where I'm returning to. But you have no idea of where I came from or where I'm returning to.
 15 You pass judgment [on me] according to fleshly logic, even though *I* judge no man.
 16 But if I *did* set myself up as judge, my judgment would be accurate, because I would not be the only one doing the judging--so would the Father who sent me.
 17 It's written in your own Torah that the testimony of two witnesses is acceptable proof in court.
 18 I testify about who and what I am, and so does my Father, who sent me.
 19 Then they asked him: Where *is* your father? Jesus answered: You don't know me *or* my Father! If you knew me, you would know my Father as well!
 20 Jesus spoke these words in the Courtyard of Women as he taught at the Temple, and no one laid a hand on him, for his hour had not yet come.
 21 Then Jesus added: I will go where I must, and you will seek me, but will continue on without repenting until you die and are lost--for where I am going you cannot come!
 22 Then the Judean [Pharisees there] said: Will he kill himself? Is that what he means when he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come?"
 23 Jesus' response was: You are from beneath, and I am from above. You are of this world, and I am *not* of this world.
 24 That is why I said that you all will die in your sins, for if you do not believe I am He, you will continue in your sins until you die [and are lost]!
 25 They asked: Then who are you? Jesus retorted: I am the same one I've told you I was from the beginning!
 26 I have many things to say about you and to pass judgment on--but He who sent me is true, and I tell the world what I heard *Him* say.
 27 They did not understand that he was speaking about the Father.
 28 Then Jesus added: When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize I am He, and that I am doing nothing on my own, but I am only speaking what my Father has taught me.
 29 And He that sent me is with me. The Father has not abandoned me, for I always do the things that please Him.
 30 As Jesus spoke these words, many believed on him.
 31 Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed on him: If you continue in my teachings, you are indeed my disciples.
 32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free!
 33 The [Pharisees] answered: We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You shall be set free'?
 34 Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever continually commits sin is the slave of sin [and in bondage to it and its god].
 35 And the slave [to sin] does not remain in the House [--meaning the Temple--] forever. But the *Son* will abide there forever!
 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.
 37 I know you are descended from Abraham, but you plot to kill me because my teachings cannot take root in your

and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.
39 They answered, and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am⁶.

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

hearts.

38 I tell about what I have seen with *my* Father, but you do the works seen of of *your* father!

39 They answered back: Abraham is our father! But Jesus said: If you really *were* Abraham's children, you would do the things Abraham did.

40 Instead, now you seek to kill me--a man who told you the truth I heard from God for you. Abraham never acted like that!

41 No, you do the deeds of your *real* father. They snapped back: *We're* not the ones who were conceived out-of-wedlock! We have *one* father [--not two, like you--] and our father is God Himself!

42 Jesus said: If God *were* your father, you would love me, because I came out from Him to you, for I didn't come on my own--He sent me to you.

43 You wonder why you can't understand my manner of speech [about going where you cannot]? It's because you don't like, and don't accept, a word I say!

44 You are the children of your father the devil, and the things he yearns for, you will fulfill. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not remain in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks what comes naturally to him, because he is a liar and the father of lies [and liars].

45 And so, because I tell you the *truth*, you don't believe me.

46 Which of you can convict me of committing sin? And if I tell you the truth, why don't you believe me?

47 He who is of God, hears God's words. You don't hear them because you obviously are not *of* God!

48 Then the Judeans retorted: Aren't we right to say you're nothing but a demon-possessed Samaritan?!

49 Jesus replied: I have no demon. I simply honor my Father in the face of your dishonoring *me*.

50 And I care nothing about my own glory. It is [God] who judges what I do, and desires to glorify me because of it.

51 Truly, truly, I say to you: If a man follows my teachings, he will never see death!

52 Then the Judeans spat back: Now we know you have a demon! Abraham and the prophets are all dead, yet you say, "If a man follows my teachings, he will never die"?!

53 Are you greater than our father Abraham or the prophets, who are dead? Just how high are you trying to elevate yourself?!

54 Jesus answered: If I'm trying to bring honor to myself, my honor is worthless. It is the Father who honors me--the One you claim is your God.

55 But you don't know Him, whereas I do. And if I were to deny that, I would be a liar like you. But I know Him, and [obey what He has said to do].

56 Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced when he glimpsed my day. *He* saw it, and was glad.

57 The Judeans retorted: You aren't fifty years old, but you've seen Abraham, have you?

58 Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you: Before Abraham was even born--I AM!

59 [At hearing Jesus use the name of God in reference to Himself], they grabbed up rocks to stone him, but he vanished and walked invisibly through their midst, leaving the Temple.

1. There is a debate among scholars regarding this event, for no manuscript older than 1000 years possesses it, and some suggest it is either spurious, or perhaps a work of Luke's. Papias, however, is recorded as having mentioned "a woman accused of many crimes before our Lord," a possible reference to this event, which he also seems to attribute to Matthew's 'Gospel of the Hebrews.'
2. Just what Jesus was writing has long been debated, with the usual assumption that He must have been writing down the sins committed by the elders, or something similar. He may have been writing down the names of those present, fulfilling a prophecy in Jeremiah 17 that the names of those who have rejected the source of Living Water would be written in the earth, a prophecy that would have been read aloud to the people during the Temple services for *Sukkot*. Jesus thus would be fulfilling this prophecy by writing down the names of those who brought the woman to Him, all of whom undoubtedly heard the prophecy read the day before, and knew exactly what the implication of Jesus' action was. Thus, they left, one by one, as He wrote down the names of those present from the oldest to the youngest.
- Another issue that may be raised is whether we correctly understand what Jesus was saying in verse 7. At face value, it seems pretty straightforward: Jesus asks that whomever is sinless cast the first stone. The problem is that the Torah nowhere asks that sinless men enact a death penalty; the Law requires only that the witnesses cast the first stones. So in what way were the consciences of the listeners affected that they leave the woman alone instead of carrying out the requirement of the Torah? It's possible that the convicting power of the Spirit simply pricked their hearts, but we see no other incidents like that in the Gospels, and some of the crowd apparently don't stay convicted for very long since they seek to stone Jesus by the end of the chapter. Now His statement to them is better translated as: "**Let the sinless one among you cast the first stone,**" and it is possible that—whatever Jesus literally said, in whatever language He said it—they understood Him to be saying, "Let the one among you who has never committed adultery or fornication cast the first stone," a position taken by the paraphrase, although this cannot be said with certainty. There is a final possibility that Jesus is saying: "Let the one among you who had no part in setting up this event in the first place cast the first stone."
3. Another term for the Court of Women, where the 13 trumpet-shaped offering boxes were placed.
4. Another clear statement by Christ that there is no other way to salvation. Also, the phrase "**die in your sins**" is an idiomatic way of saying they will continue their course of rebellion to the end of their lives, not simply that they will die without proper atonement.
5. The "**they**" are not those who believed in Jesus, but hostile Pharisees (verse 13) in the crowd.
6. In what continually enraged the elders, Jesus uses the Ineffable Name of God (YHVH) about Himself. Or, if He literally spoke in the Greek the text is written in, He said "*ego eimi*" which harkens back to the Septuagint's Greek of "**I am he**" in Isaiah 41:4.

JOHN CHAPTER 9

1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.
 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?¹
 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.
 4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.
 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.
 6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,²
 7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.
 8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?
 9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.
 10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?
 11 He answered, and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.
 12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.
 13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.
 14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.
 15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

JOHN CHAPTER 9

1 As Jesus was walking along, he came upon a beggar who had been blind from his birth.
 2 His disciples asked him: Rabbi—who sinned, that this man was born blind? Was it himself [in a previous life, and God cursed him to be reborn blind]? Was it his parents?
 3 Jesus replied: Neither. This happened so that the works of God can be displayed in him, and
 4 I must perform the works of Him who sent me while it is still day. The night is coming when no man can work.
 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.
 6 After he had spoken that, Jesus spat on the ground, kneaded it into mud, and placed the mud upon the man's eyes.
 7 He told him: Go wash in the pool of Siloam (a word meaning *sent*). He went as he was told, washed himself in the pool, and came up seeing!
 8 When he came walking home, his neighbors—and those who had seen him blind from before—were amazed, and said: Isn't that the blind man who used to sit, and beg?
 9 Some said: It's he! Others said: No, he just looks like him. But he said: I am the man.
 10 Therefore, they asked: How did you get your sight back?!!
 11 He answered: A man named Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes with it, then he told me, "Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash." I did so, and could see!
 12 Then they asked: Where is he? And the man answered: I don't know.
 13 So they brought him to the Pharisees.
 14 It so happened that this was the Sabbath when Jesus had made the mud and opened his eyes.
 15 The Pharisees repeated the question, asking how he had received his sight. The man said: He put mud on

16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.³
 17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.
 18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.
 19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?
 20 His parents answered them, and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:
 21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.
 22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.
 23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.
 24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.
 25 He answered, and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.
 26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?
 27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?
 28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.
 29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.
 30 The man answered, and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.
 31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.
 32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.
 33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.
 34 They answered, and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.
 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?
 36 He answered, and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?
 37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.
 38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.
 39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.
 40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind

my eyes, I washed it out, and I can now see.
 16 Therefore some of the [Shammaite] Pharisees said: This man is not of God, because he violates the command to rest on the Sabbath! Others [from the school of Hillel] said: How can a sinner work miracles like this? So there was a division of opinion about Jesus.
 17 They turned back to the man and asked: What do *you* think about this man, since you're the one whose eyes he opened? He answered: That he is a prophet!
 18 But the Judeans became skeptical that the man had even been blind until they summoned his parents.
 19 So they asked them: Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How is it that he now sees?
 20 The parents replied: This is indeed our son, and he was indeed born blind.
 21 But how he can see now, we have no idea. Nor do we know who did it. He's an adult--ask *him*! He can speak for himself!
 22 His parents spoke like this because they feared the Judean authorities, for they had already issued an edict that anyone who proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah would be excommunicated from the synagogues.
 23 So his parents ducked the question, and told the Pharisees: "He's an adult--ask *him*!"
 24 The Pharisees again summoned the man, and told him: Give praise to *God* for this--we know this man is a sinner!
 25 He answered them: I have no idea whether he is a sinner or not--I only know that where before I was blind, now I can see!
 26 Then they asked again: Well, just how did he do it?! How did he heal your eyes?!
 27 He answered back: I already told you, and you didn't hear it--are you deaf? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?
 28 Then they rose up, enraged at him, and said: *You* may be his disciple, but we are *Moses'* disciples!
 29 We know God spoke to Moses. As for this man, we know nothing about him, or where he comes from!
 30 To this, the man said: Now this is a great thing--he made me, a blind man, able to see, yet you know nothing about him, or where he's from?
 31 We all know God doesn't hear the prayer of sinners, but if any man worships God and does His will--God hears *that* man's call!
 32 Since the world began, it's never been said that a man made a person born blind able to see [including the greatest of prophets].
 33 If this man weren't of God, he could do nothing!
 34 Furious, they answered: You were born blind because of your sins to start with--and you dare teach *us*?! So they [excommunicated him, and] threw him out.
 34 [Alternate reading]: Furious, they answered: You *mamser*--who do you think you are to teach *us*?! So they [excommunicated him, and] threw him out.
 35 Jesus heard about this, and when he found the man, he asked him: Do you believe on the Son of God?
 36 The man replied: Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?
 37 Jesus answered: You have seen him--he is the one talking with you now!

also?
41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

38 And he said: Lord, I believe! Then he did obeisance to him.
39 Jesus said: I have come so that judgment would come to this world, so the blind would be made to see, and so those who see would become blind.
40 Some of the Pharisees who were with him and heard this asked: Are we also blind in your opinion?
41 Jesus said in response: If you *were* truly blind, you would have no sin. But you insist you are not, saying, "We can see just fine." Therefore, [you cannot repent, and] your sin remains upon you.

1. The Greek here can theoretically be understood not as suggesting that the apostles were asking if the man was guilty of some sort of sin before his birth, which caused him to literally be born blind ("**made blind**" is an acceptable translation); but could pose the question of whether he was made blind by some sort of sin on the part of him or his parents. (It was a common notion that God could punish children for the sins or their parents.) However, there were and are some beliefs in Judaism of souls having pre-existence before birth, or of some limited reincarnation. It's not impossible for the apostles to be approaching the subject with those ancient extra-biblical beliefs in mind. In no way does this incident give credence to any notion that the New Testament affirms reincarnation since that doctrine contradicts everything the New Testament teaches on death, judgment, and the Resurrection.
2. Jesus here is intentionally breaking rabbinic Sabbatical law by kneading, creating medicine on the Sabbath (spit was thought to have medicinal properties), and then performing the healing of a non-life-threatening illness.
3. We see here the divide between the Shammaiites and Hillelites over Jesus, with the followers of Shammai rejecting Him out of hand because He fails to keep the strict Pharisaic law, while the Hillelites aren't sure.

JOHN CHAPTER 10

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.
2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.
3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.
4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.
5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.
6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.
7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.
8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.
9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.
10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.
11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.
12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.
13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.
14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.
15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.
16 And other sheep¹ I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

JOHN CHAPTER 10

1 Truly, truly, I tell you: A man who comes into the sheep pen by some way other than through the gate is obviously a thief and robber.
2 But he who comes in through the gate is obviously the shepherd of the sheep.
3 To him, the Gatekeeper opens the gate up, and the sheep hear his voice calling them each by name, and so he leads them out.
4 And after he brings his sheep out, he walks before them and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.
5 They won't follow a stranger, but will run from him because they don't recognize the voice of strangers.
6 Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they didn't understand the meaning of what he spoke.
7 So he said again: Truly, truly, I tell you: I am the Gate to the sheep.
8 All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them.
9 I am the Gate. If any man comes in through me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.
10 The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I have come so that all might find supernatural fullness of life, and have it in abundance.
11 I am the good shepherd, and a good shepherd will sacrifice his life to save his sheep.
12 But a hired hand, who doesn't consider the sheep his own, will run at the first sight of a wolf, leaving the sheep to fend for themselves--and the wolf will ravage the whole flock.
13 The hired hand runs because he doesn't work unless he is paid to, and he cares nothing for the sheep he has charge over.
14 I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and they know me,
15 As the Father knows me, I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
16 And there are other sheep I have that are not of this flock. I must gather them into the flock as well, and they will respond to my voice, and come. Then there will be one flock with one shepherd.

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.
 19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.
 20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?
 21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?
 22 And it was at Jerusalem the Feast of the dedication², and it was winter.
 23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.
 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.
 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.
 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.
 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.
 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.
 30 I and my Father are one.³
 31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.
 32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?
 33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.
 34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?
 35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;
 36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?
 37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.
 38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.
 39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,
 40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.
 41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.
 42 And many believed on him there.

17 Thus, because I willingly lay down my life [for my sheep], that I might take it up again, my Father loves me.
 18 No man takes my life from me; I freely lay it down. I have the power both to lay it down, and to pick it up again. This permission I received from my Father.
 19 These words caused a new split amongst the Judean leaders over Jesus.
 20 Many said: He's demon-possessed, and insane! Why do you listen to him?
 21 Others said: These don't sound like the words of a demon-possessed man. Can a demon make a blind man see?
 22 Now it was winter at Jerusalem during the Feast of *Hanukkah*,
 23 And Jesus happened to be walking in Solomon's porch in the Temple complex.
 24 Then a group of Judean leaders encircled him, and demanded to know: How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, say it plainly!
 25 Jesus answered: I already told you what I was, but you didn't believe it. The miracles I do in my Father's name *prove* who and what I am!
 26 But as I told you, you don't believe it because you're not my sheep.
 27 *My* sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man take them from my hand.
 29 My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than anyone or anything, and no one is able to take them out of my *Father's* hand.
 30 Thus, I and my Father are one!
 31 The Judeans, upon hearing this, again reached for rocks to stone Jesus.
 32 But Jesus replied: Many good deeds have I shown you from my Father. For which of them are you stoning me?
 33 The Judeans answered: We're stoning you for blasphemy, not for doing good deeds! You, being a mere man, have the gall to equate yourself with God!
 34 Jesus answered back: Doesn't your own Torah say: **I said, Ye are gods?**
 35 If God called mortal men "**gods**" to whom the Word of God came, and since the Scripture cannot fail,
 36 Why do you say to the one God sanctified and sent to the earth, 'You're blaspheming,' because I affirm that I am the Son of God?
 37 If I don't do the deeds my Father does, then don't believe me.
 38 But if I *do*, even if you won't believe *me*, then believe what you see, and accept that the Father is in me and I in Him.
 39 Therefore, the crowd sought to drag him off to be stoned, but he escaped from their hands,
 40 And departed the city to the place at the far side of the Jordan where John first baptized. There he encamped [with the disciples].
 41 Many people came to him there, and said: John did no miraculous deeds, but everything he said about this man is true!
 42 And many people put their faith in him at that place.

1. The "other sheep" are the Gentiles.

2. *Hanukkah*. It is interesting to note that Jesus honors an extra-biblical holiday of the Jews.

3. A key Trinitarian verse. Jesus has obviously claimed equality with God--an otherwise blasphemous act worthy of stoning, which the elders immediately seek to do. While some non-Trinitarians would attempt to use verses 34 and 35 as a claim that Jesus is qualifying His Godhood as on par with, or only slightly superior to, that of a judge or king over Israel, the fact that Jesus intentionally uses the Ineffable Name, along with language calculated to be understood in a manner that implies He is claiming to be Deity, makes it clear that Jesus is indeed claiming equality with the Father, but yet is in voluntary submission.

JOHN CHAPTER 11

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany¹, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.
 2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)
 3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.
 4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.
 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.
 6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.²
 7 Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.
 8 His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews³ of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?
 9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.
 10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.
 11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.
 12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.
 13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.
 14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.
 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.
 16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.⁴
 17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.
 18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:
 19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.
 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.
 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.
 22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.
 23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.
 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.
 25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:
 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall

JOHN CHAPTER 11

1 Now a certain man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the town where he and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, lived.
 2 [It was Mary, the sister of this same sick man Lazarus, who anointed Jesus with ointment, and dried his feet with her hair.]
 3 Therefore, his sisters sent word to Jesus, saying:
Lord--the man you love is sick!
 4 When Jesus heard that, he said: This sickness is not for death, but to glorify God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.
 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus.
 6 But when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he remained where he was for two more days.
 7 After that, he told the disciples: Let's return to Judea.
 8 The disciples said in response: Master--the Judeans just tried to *stone* you, and you're going back?!
 9 Jesus replied: Aren't there twelve hours of daylight during which a man can walk without stumbling because he can see in the light?
 10 But if a man walks in the night, he will stumble because no light is in him.
 11 He added after saying that: Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, and I must go to awaken him from that sleep.
 12 But the disciples said: Lord, if he's resting we don't *need* to go, for he will be fine.
 13 But Jesus was talking about Lazarus' death, and the disciples misunderstood him to be talking of resting in normal sleep.
 14 Finally, Jesus said plainly: Lazarus is dead.
 15 And I rejoice for your sakes I was not there [to heal him], because your faith will now be strengthened. Let us go to him.
 16 Then said Thomas, called Didymus ["the twin"], to the other disciples: We may as well go too--and die with him.
 17 When Jesus arrived a couple of days later, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.
 18 Now Bethany is only a couple of miles from Jerusalem.
 19 And many Jews from there visited Martha and Mary to comfort them at their brother's loss.
 20 Then Martha, when she heard that Jesus was approaching, went out to meet him, but Mary remained sitting *shiva* in the house, and did not stir.
 21 When she met him, Martha said to Jesus: Lord--if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!
 22 But I know that even now, God will do whatever you ask Him to.
 23 Jesus told her: Your brother will rise again.
 24 Martha said in response: I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.
 25 Jesus proclaimed: *I* am the resurrection, and the life! He who places faith in me, though he is dead, yet shall he live!
 26 And whoever lives, and places faith in me, shall

never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.⁵

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.⁶

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees⁷ a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place⁸ and nation.

49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation

never die. Do you believe this?

27 Martha said: Yes, Lord--I have faith that you are the Messiah, the Son of God who was to come into the world!

28 After she said this, she went her way and secretly called her sister Mary, saying: *The Master is here, and is calling for you.*

29 As soon as Mary heard that, she hastily rose up and came to where Jesus was.

30 Now Jesus wasn't in town yet, but outside it [near the graveyard] where Martha had met him.

31 When the Jews who had been in the house with her saw Mary hurry out, they followed her, saying: She must be going to the grave to weep there.

32 When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and cried out: Lord--if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!

33 When Jesus saw that both she and the Judeans who came with her were weeping, he groaned in his spirit, and was troubled.

34 He asked: Where have you laid him? They said: Lord, come see!

35 Jesus began to sob.

36 [When they saw this,] the Judeans said: See how he loved him?

37 But some said: Couldn't he, who made that blind fellow see, have saved *this* man from dying?

38 Jesus, groaning in himself [at these statements], came to the tomb, which was inside a cave over whose mouth a large stone had been placed.

39 Jesus said: Some of you go remove the stone.

Martha, the sister of the dead man, replied: Lord, by now he smells terrible--it's been four days since he died and was interred!

40 Jesus said in response: Did I not say that if you will have faith, you will see the glory of God?

41 So they rolled the stone away from the tomb where the dead Lazarus lay. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said: Father, I thank You that You have heard me.

42 And I know You always hear me, but because of the people standing here, I said that to help them have faith that You sent me.

43 After saying this, Jesus shouted: Lazarus, come out!

44 And the dead man did come out, wrapped up in linen like a mummy, with even his face wrapped in a swath of cloth. Jesus said: Get him free of those wrappings.

45 Then many of the Judeans who had come to Mary and seen the spectacular things he did placed faith in Jesus.

46 But others went to tell the Pharisees what Jesus had done.

47 Then the chief Sadducee priests and some of the key Pharisees formed a sanhedrin, and debated: What shall we do about this man, for he does many miracles?

48 If we don't stop him, all the people will believe on him, and the Romans will come and destroy our Temple and nation.

49 And one of them named Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, said to them: You know nothing at all!

50 Nor have you enough brains to realize it is better for us that one man die for the people so that Israel itself does not die!

perish not.

51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews⁹; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

55 And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.

56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him.

51 His words did not come from his own mind, but being High Priest that year, he spoke a prophecy [from God, who honored his position,] that Jesus should die for the nation.

52 And not only for Israel, but that he also would gather together, in one, all the children of God who were scattered upon the earth [--both Jew *and* Gentile].

53 From that point on, they all plotted how to put Jesus to death.

54 Jesus thus no longer walked openly among the Judeans, but retreated into the desert countryside to the city of Ephraim, where he remained with the disciples.

55 Then came the Jewish Passover, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem beforehand in order to ritually purify themselves.

56 These people looked for Jesus, and debated amongst themselves as they stood around at the Temple: What do you think? Won't he come for the Festival?

57 Meanwhile, both the chief Sadducee priests and the Pharisees had issued a joint edict that if anyone knew where Jesus was, they should inform them so they could take him into custody.

1. Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, was renowned for the citizens showing special hospitality toward pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. In all probability, Jesus met the family of Lazarus by being invited in off the road to dine with the family as He and the apostles passed the house.

2. It is unfair to think that Jesus deliberately waited for two days, intentionally allowing poor Lazarus to suffer and die. As we see from verse 17, by the time Jesus arrives, even after waiting for two days, Lazarus has already been buried for *four* days. Thus, Lazarus may well have already been dead by the time the messenger arrived in the first place, although it's still possible that Jesus allowed him to die so that He could bring glory to God by resurrecting him, and through that also build the faith of His followers. Part of the reason Jesus delayed in coming may be attributed to a belief among the Jews that a spirit hovered around the body for three days after death, during which time there was a chance of revival. By arriving on the fourth day, any possible hope of Lazarus returning to life would be absolutely gone, short of a miracle of God.

3. A perfect example of the anti-Semitism of the King James Bible. The word should absolutely be translated as "**Judeans**," not "**Jews**!"

4. An interesting glimpse into Thomas' morose personality.

5. It is interesting to note that Mary--the one who loved Jesus most--was the one who was also most angry and disappointed that He had not come earlier. This seems to be why she remains inside, undergoing the *Shiva*--customary sitting and mourning--instead of going out with Martha to meet Jesus.

6. The shortest verse in the Bible. We don't know why Jesus was weeping. It probably was His own pain and grief over the sisters' lack of faith, and their own visible resentment over His delay in coming, coupled with remarks from the crowd.

7. The "**Pharisees**" in this instance must have been predominantly Shammaiites. We can reasonably presume that the Hillelites were largely kept out of the loop by the fact that Gamaliel is not mentioned in any of the events of the Crucifixion, and is later praised in Acts. Had Gamaliel, as the head of the Sanhedrin, been a participant in the council formed by the Sadducees and Shammaiites, it is unthinkable that Acts would speak so positively about him. It is likely that he was not in Jerusalem during the final culmination of Christ's ministry, although we cannot know that for certain.

8. The "**Place**" is another word for the Temple, not a reference to the elders' positions of power.

9. Again, should be translated "**Judeans**."

JOHN CHAPTER 12

1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what

JOHN CHAPTER 12

1 In the six days before Passover, Jesus went to Bethany where Lazarus, the man he had raised from the dead, was.

2 They prepared dinner for him there, Martha doing the serving, while Lazarus reclined at the table with him.

3 Mary took a pound of expensive spikenard ointment and anointed Jesus' feet with it. Then she dried them with her long hair, and the whole house smelled from the scent of the ointment.

4 Seeing this, Simon's son, Judas Iscariot--who would betray him--grumbled:

5 This ointment could be sold for nearly a year's wages! Why not do so, and give it to the poor?

6 He said this not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief--for he was the group's treasurer, and would embezzle money from the community purse.

was put therein.¹
 7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.
 8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.
 9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.
 10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;
 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.²
 12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,
 13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.
 14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,
 15 Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.³
 16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.
 17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.
 18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.
 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.
 20 And there were certain Greeks⁴ among them that came up to worship at the feast:
 21 The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.
 22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.
 23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.
 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.
 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.
 26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.
 27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.
 28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.
 29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.⁵
 30 Jesus answered, and said, This voice came not

7 Jesus answered: Let her alone. She has done this to prepare for the day of my burial.
 8 You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me with you.
 9 Many of the Judeans, by the way, knew Jesus was there and so they came not just to see him, but also Lazarus whom he had resurrected from the dead.
 10 Then the chief priests of the Temple plotted to kill Lazarus as well,
 11 Because the miracle involving him caused many of the Judeans to leave, rejecting them and placing faith in Jesus.
 12 The next day, when they heard Jesus was on his way to the Festival, many people who were coming to Jerusalem,
 13 Took palm fronds and went out to meet him, crying: Save now! Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord!
 14 And Jesus, when he had found a young donkey, sat upon it, fulfilling a prophecy:
 15 **Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.**
 16 When such things were happening, the disciples did not understand their implications. But after Jesus was glorified, they remembered all these various prophecies, and things like this that done to fulfill them.
 17 Meanwhile, the people who were there when Jesus called Lazarus forth from the grave, and raised him up from the dead, were spreading word of the miracle.
 18 Because of this, others flocked to Jesus after hearing word of this miracle he had done.
 19 When the Pharisees saw this, they said amongst themselves: See? You can't stop him. Look--the whole world has gone after him!
 20 Now there were certain Greek proselytes to Judaism who had also come to Jerusalem to participate in the Feast.
 21 They came to Philip, who was from the town of Bethsaida [--meaning *House of the Hunt*--] in Galilee, and told him: Sir, we would like to speak to Jesus.
 22 Philip passed word to Andrew, and Andrew and Philip both went, and told Jesus.
 23 And Jesus answered: [Now even the Gentiles are coming!] The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
 24 Truly, truly, I say to you: Except a kernel of wheat be buried in the ground and die, it will remain a single seed. But if it dies, it will provide a great harvest of grain.
 25 The person who loves his life shall lose it, but he who hates his earthly life shall keep it into eternity and eternal life.
 26 If any man will serve me, let him follow me, and where I am my servant shall be also. And if any man serves me my Father will honor him.
 27 Now my soul is distressed [at what lies ahead]. But what shall I say: "Father, save me from this hour"? No--it was for this approaching hour that I came.
 28 Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice thundered from heaven that said: I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again!
 29 Some of the people [with hard hearts] who were there said: That was only thunder. But others: An angel spoke to him.

because of me, but for your sakes.

31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

34 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

44 Jesus cried, and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

30 But Jesus said: This voice was for your sake, not mine.

31 Now this world shall be judged. Now the prince of this world will be cast out.

32 And I, if I be lifted up above the earth, will draw all men to me.

33 He said this to signify the sort of death he would die.

34 But the people now said: We've heard that the Torah says that the Messiah will live forever. How is it you say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"? Who is this "Son of Man"?

35 Jesus responded: For only a little while longer will the light be with you. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you, for he who walks in darkness doesn't know where he is going.

36 While you have the light with you, place faith in the light, that you may be the children of enlightenment. Jesus spoke these things and then left, disappearing into the crowd, and vanishing from everyone's view.

37 But despite the many miracles that he had done before their eyes, the people did not believe on him,

38 That the words of Isaiah would be fulfilled: **Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?**

39 Therefore, they could not believe because Isaiah also said,

40 **He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.**

41 Isaiah said these things when he foresaw and spoke of Jesus' glory.

42 Nevertheless, many—including some of the chief rulers of the people—did believe [in what he claimed to be], but they did not say so because they feared the Pharisees would excommunicate them from the synagogues.

43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

44 Jesus shouted out: He who believes on me, believes not on me, but on Him who sent me!

45 And he who sees me sees Him who sent me!

46 I have come as a light to the world so that whoever believes on me will not remain [trapped] in darkness.

47 And if any man hears my words and does not believe them, I do not judge him, for I came not to judge [and condemn] the world, but to save it!

48 He who rejects me and my words has this as his judge—the very words he has rejected! Every word I spoke that he rejected will come back to condemn him at the Last Judgment!

49 For I have not spoken at my own whim. The Father who sent me commanded me what to tell you.

50 And I know that to do what He says is to receive life everlasting, so what He has said to me, I pass on to you!

1. Against the teaching of some that Jesus was penniless, the fact that the group had need of a treasurer shows that large amounts of money had to have passed through the apostles' hands. Just as clearly, the text suggests that it fell to Judas to disburse the offering brought by the people to the poor.

2. Keep in mind that one reason the Sadducees want to kill Lazarus is that they deny a resurrection will take place, and Lazarus is living proof of their false theology.

3. This prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 about the King arriving on a donkey caused the Jews some problems because of a contradictory belief that the Messiah would arrive on a white horse, symbolizing victory and kingly rule. The problem was essentially solved in two ways, with some groups holding to the notion of two coming Messiahs (the *Messiah ben Joseph* and the *Messiah ben David*); and the Talmud opining that only one Messiah would come, arriving on a donkey if the people were unrighteous, or on a white horse

if they *were* righteous. As we see in Rev. 19, Jesus arrives on a white horse, showing that the Jews are indeed righteous—meaning they have accepted His atonement and imputed righteousness by faith.

4. Possibly Hellenistic Hebrew Jews, but more likely Gentile converts to Judaism, or “God-Fearers.” In the final stages of Jesus’ earthly ministry, even the Gentiles now desire to hear Him. How He must have rejoiced, despite the time of testing ahead!

5. It is here that the Jews finally receive the sign they have demanded: a *Bat Kol*, or heavenly voice, confirming that Christ is the Messiah. Yet we now see why there was never a point to Jesus acceding to their demand, for the hardness of their hearts showed they were incapable of perceiving God even if He *did* speak to them, mistaking, in their spiritual deafness, a *Bat Kol* for normal thunder. This is a warning to us as well, showing there should be very little upon which we are absolutely dogmatic on, lest we also become blind to the truth as we proclaim our doctrine is infallible. This is why many in Christian denominations—some good, some bad—cannot see truths in the Scripture that contradict their denominational beliefs: Their dogmatic insistence that their beliefs are infallible or “have” to be true.

JOHN CHAPTER 13

1 Now before the Feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son¹, to betray him;

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered, and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet², but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.³

18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

JOHN CHAPTER 13

1 Now just before the day of the Passover sacrifice, Jesus—knowing his time to depart the world and return to the Father was at hand—having loved his own, loved them to the end.

2 After the dinner was over, Satan having inspired the heart of Judas Iscariot—Simon’s son—to betray him,

3 Jesus, who knew that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God, and would now return to God,

4 Rose from the table, removed his robes, and donned a towel around his waist [--the garb of a slave].

5 He poured some water into a basin and began washing the disciples’ feet. Then he dried them with the towel he was dressed with.

6 When he came to Shimon Peter, Peter tried to stop him, saying: Lord--you’re [lowering yourself] to wash my feet?!

7 Jesus answered back: You can’t understand what I’m doing right now, but eventually you will.

8 But Peter said: You will never wash my feet! Jesus said in response: If I don’t wash you, then you have no part with me.

9 Shimon Peter then said: [Give me a whole bath then!]

10 Jesus replied: He who has had a bath needs only to have the dust of the earth that clings to his feet washed away, because he is fully cleansed. You are already clean, most of you—but not all.

11 Jesus said this because he knew who would betray him, so that’s why he said, “You are already clean, most of you—but not all.”

12 So after Jesus had washed their feet and donned his normal clothes again, he reclined at the table, and asked: Do you understand what I just did to you?

13 You call me “Master” and “Lord,” and you’re right to do that, because I am.

14 If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet like a slave, how much more should *you* be ready to serve each other even in the most menial way?

15 I did this an example that you should have the same attitude toward each other as I just displayed to you.

16 Truly, truly, I say to you: The slave is not above his master, neither is the one sent [with a message] greater than the one who *commissioned* him to give that message.

17 If you understand and put into practice these concepts I’ve taught you, you will indeed be happy!

18 I’m not talking to all of you—I know the ones I have chosen. But so that the Scripture can be fulfilled, it’s true that: **He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.**

19 I’m telling you that now so that when things are set in

21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.
 22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.
 23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.⁴
 24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.
 25 He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?
 26 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.
 27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.
 28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.
 29 For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.
 30 He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.
 31 Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.
 32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.
 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.
 34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.
 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
 36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.
 37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.
 38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow⁵, till thou hast denied me thrice.

motion, you will believe that I am He.
 20 Truly, truly, I say to you: He who receives whomever I send forth receives me. And he who receives me, receives Him who sent me.
 21 After speaking this, Jesus was greatly saddened in spirit, and said: Truly, truly, I say to you--one of you will betray me.
 22 Then the disciples looked back and forth at each other, wondering who it might be.
 23 Now leaning close to Jesus, on his right side, was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.
 24 Shimon Peter gestured to catch his attention, and mouthed the words: "Ask him who."
 25 John then whispered to Jesus: Lord, who is it?
 26 Jesus whispered back: The one to whom I will hand the unleavened bread after dipping it. Then, when Jesus had dipped the unleavened bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.
 27 After receiving the unleavened bread, Satan entered into Judas, and Jesus told him: What you have to do, do quickly!
 28 No one at the table knew what Jesus meant by this.
 29 Some thought that because Judas was the treasurer, Jesus was saying, "Buy something for the Passover," or that he should give a donation to the poor.
 30 So Judas, having received the portion of bread, immediately went out. And it was night.
 31 After Judas left, Jesus announced: Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God glorified in him.
 32 And if God is glorified by the Son, the Son will, in turn, be glorified in God and will immediately receive God's glory in himself.
 33 Little children, for only a short time more will I be with you. You will seek me, but as I told the Judeans, Where I go, you cannot come, and I say the same to you.
 34 Now I give you this new commandment: Love each other as I have loved you--exactly as I have loved you!
 35 This is how all men will know that you are disciples of mine: Your [unselfish] love for each other.
 36 Shimon Peter asked: Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied: Where I am going, you cannot go now; but you will follow me there in time.
 37 Peter responded: Lord--why can't I follow you right now? I will lay my life down for you if need be!
 38 Jesus answered: Will you really lay down your life for me, Peter? Truly, truly, I say to you: The "rooster" will not cry out before you deny even knowing me, not once, but three times!

1. Probably the Simon of Bethany (see Matthew 26).

2. This is a reference to the spiritual fact that we are "**washed**" clean of our sin through Christ's atonement. Even so, we still sin and need Him to wash the incidental sin that still remains in our lives as we live on the earth.

3. This is one of very few verses in the New Testament that illustrates how one can be "**happy**."

4. During the Passover seder, it was customary for a rabbi's youngest student to recline with him on his right, whereas his oldest student would recline on his left. These are exactly the positions we see Judas and John (whom we know was chronologically the youngest of the apostles) in.

Just when the group holds their seder is a matter of debate along with the precise date of the Crucifixion. I hold the view that this occurs on Wednesday, Nisan 14, 30 AD, with the Crucifixion happening Thursday (which is still Nisan 14 until sundown). We can never know with 100% certainty because we don't know what calendar Jesus was observing. The Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed on how to count certain Feast days, and so the Sadducees would sometimes have false witnesses come forth to claim they had seen the new moon before it actually rose. The Essenes, meanwhile, had their own calendar, and Jesus might have been using it since, according to tradition, the Last Supper was celebrated in an Essene area of Jerusalem. This has brought up the question in the minds of some whether Jesus is somehow violating the Torah by holding a seder on an improper day. My speculation--although there is no historic evidence to support it--is that the people were slaughtering Passover lambs not merely on the Pharisee preparation day, but throughout the week. I base this on the fact that Josephus (Jewish Wars, vi. 9,3; ii. 14, 3) records that over 250,000 lambs were sacrificed. Each lamb fed up to 10 people, and given the fact that there was a window of only 3 hours (noon to 3 PM--although some

claim it may have been a 6-hour window) in which to slay those lambs, it is a sheer impossibility to have accomplished the sacrifice in that amount of time, requiring each of the two lines to sacrifice 12 lambs per second (or 6 lambs if you take the more generous figure). As efficient as the people may have been, it is beyond belief that they could consistently move into position, slay and then pour the blood of 6-12 lambs each second for several hours.

Edersheim on the slaughtering of the Passover lambs

It was done on this wise: The First of the three festive divisions, with their Paschal lambs, was admitted within the Court of the Priests. Each division must consist of not less than thirty persons (3x10, the symbolical number of the Divine and of completeness). Immediately the massive gates were closed behind them. The priests drew a threefold blast from their silver trumpets when the Passover was slain. Altogether the scene was most impressive. All along the Court up to the altar of burnt-offering priests stood in two rows, the one holding golden, the other silver bowls. In these the blood of the Paschal lambs, which each Israelite slew for himself (as representative of his company at the Paschal Supper), was caught up by a priest, who handed it to his colleague, receiving back an empty bowl, and so the bowls with the blood were passed up to the priest at the altar, who jerked it in one jet at the base of the altar. While this was going on, a most solemn 'hymn' of praise was raised, the Levites leading in song, and the offerers either repeating after them or merely responding. Every first line of a Psalm was repeated by the people, while to each of the others they responded by a 'Hallelujah,' or 'Praise ye the Lord.' This service of song consisted of the so-called 'Hallel,' which comprised Psalms 113 to 118.

5. Again, not referring to a rooster (which were forbidden in Jerusalem by Pharisee custom), but to the *gever*, a Temple officer who shouted the command for the various trumpets to sound, calling the priests to their stations.

JOHN CHAPTER 14

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.
 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.
 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?
 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.
 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.
 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?
 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.
 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.
 12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.
 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.¹
 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.²
 15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.
 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;
 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth

JOHN CHAPTER 14

1 Don't let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God. Have faith in me as well.
 2 In my Father's mansion are many rooms. If that were not the case, I would have told you. I am going to prepare places for each of you.
 3 And since I am going to prepare a place for each of you, I will return and receive you to myself, so where I am you will also be.
 4 The place I am going, you already know. You also know the way to go there.
 5 Thomas said to this: Lord, we *don't* know where you're going, so how *can* we know the way?
 6 Jesus proclaimed: *I* am the way, the truth, and the life! No man shall come to the Father except through me!
 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father as well. And from this point on, you know Him and have seen Him.
 8 Philip now spoke up, saying: Lord--then *show* us the Father, and that will satisfy us.
 9 Jesus replied: Have I been with you so long that [even now] you don't know me, Philip? He who has seen me has *seen* the Father! So how is it that you say, "Show us the Father"?
 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and He is in me? The words I speak to you come from Him, not me--and the Father who dwells in me is the one doing the mighty deeds you've seen me do!
 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father, and He is in me. And if my word isn't good enough, then believe because of the miracles you've seen with your very own eyes.
 12 Truly, truly, I say to you: He who places faith in me, the same miracles I do, he will do--and even greater than these will he do because I am going to my Father!
 13 And whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so the Father will be glorified in the Son.
 14 I repeat: If you ask anything in my name, I will do it!
 15 And if you love *me*, do what I have commanded you to do.
 16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper who will be with you forever.
 17 He is the Spirit of truth, whom the world at large

him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in³ you.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot⁴, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23 Jesus answered, and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

cannot receive because it doesn't see Him, neither does it know Him. But you know Him, for He accompanies you, and shall be in you!

18 I won't leave you helpless! I will come to you [through the Spirit I send].

19 In a short time, the world will see me no more, but you will see me. And because *I* will live, you will live also.

20 At that day, you will absolutely know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

21 He who knows and keeps my commands is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father as well, and I will love that person and reveal myself to him.

22 Jude said to him: Lord, how is it that you will show yourself to us, but not to the world as a whole?

23 Jesus answered: If a man loves me, he will [walk in my teachings,] and my Father will love Him--and both of us will come to him and make our home with him [through the Spirit I will send].

24 He who doesn't love me doesn't [walk in my teachings], and those teachings are not mine but those of the Father who sent me.

25 These things I have spoken while I was still with you.

26 But the Helper, whom the Father will send in my name--the Holy Spirit--shall teach you everything you need to know, and He will bring to your memory all the words I have spoken to you.

27 Peace I bequeath to you--true peace, not the sort of peace mankind offers! So don't let your hearts be troubled, nor let fear rule them!

28 You have heard me say, "I am going away"; and, "I will return to you". If you loved me, you would rejoice at the fact I said "I am going to the Father," for My Father is greater than I.

29 And I have told you this now, before things come to a head, so that when these things happen you will believe [and not stumble].

30 I can only talk with you for a short while longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no power over me,

31 But so that the world may know that I love the Father, I obey what He has commanded me to do. Arise, and let us go from this place.

1. A strong verse showing the Deity of Christ, for here He takes upon Himself the right of Deity to answer prayers made to Him, a right otherwise reserved only for God. Some of the oldest texts also have "ask *me*" in the passage.

2. If the first statement wasn't enough, here Jesus reiterates that He will accept prayers made to Him, a right reserved only for God.

3. This verse is one that has become the basis of a teaching by some that denies the literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit within believers in favor of some nebulous "relationship with the Holy Spirit." That doctrine is quickly overturned by simply noting that in the same verse Jesus has acknowledged the apostles are *already* in relationship with the Holy Spirit ("**He dwelleth with you...**"), who will now move from a position of relationship to a literal inhabitation within the jar of clay of the believer ("**He shall be in you**").

4. This is possibly the father of Mark. Otherwise, many presume it to be the apostle also known as Jude Thaddeus. There is even speculation it is referring to Thomas by his actual Hebrew name.

JOHN CHAPTER 15

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:¹ and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no

JOHN CHAPTER 15

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he cuts off and casts away. Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes so that it bears more fruit.

3 You are all clean from the Message I preached to you [that you have believed and followed].

4 Abide in me, and I will abide in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit on its own without being a part of the vine, you cannot bear fruit unless you abide in me.

more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.²

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay own his life for his friends.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.³

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.⁴

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

26 But when the Comforter⁵ is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

5 Again--I am the vine, and you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, brings forth much fruit, for outside of me you can do nothing.

6 If a man does not abide in me, he is cast out like a dried-up branch that men gather into bundles and throw into the fire to burn up.

7 If you abide in me, and my [teachings] abide in you, you shall ask what you want and it will be granted to you.

8 This is how my Father is glorified--that you be my disciples, and bear much fruit.

9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love.

10 If you do what I have ordered you to do, you will remain in my love, just as I did what my Father ordered me to do, and thus abide in *His* love.

11 These things I have told you so that my joy will remain in you, and your own joy may be full.

12 This is my command to you: Love each other with the same love I have loved you with.

13 There is no greater love a man can have, than that he sacrifice his own life to save the lives of his friends.

14 You are my friends if you do what I command you to do.

15 From now on, I no longer consider you to be servants. Servants don't know what their master is doing--but friends do, and now I call you *friends*. Everything my Father has told me, I have told you.

16 You have not chosen me--I chose you, and ordained you so you could go and bear fruit that will last forever, so that if you ask anything as my representatives you may receive it from my Father.

17 This is my command--that you love one another.

18 If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If you were a part of this [lost] world, it would love you, because it loves its own. But because you are not of this world, but have been chosen by me to come out of it, the world hates you.

20 Remember what I said in teaching: *The servant is not greater than his Lord*. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you. If they used my own words against me, they will use yours against you.

21 But they will do all these things to you because of who and what I am, since they do not know Him who sent me.

22 If I had not come and corrected them, they would not be guilty of having sinned. But now they have no way to claim ignorance regarding their sin.

23 He who hates me hates my Father!

24 If I had not done the miracles among them that no man has ever done, they would not be counted guilty of sin. But they saw and hated both me and my Father.

25 But this came about so that a prophecy in their

Scriptures could be fulfilled: **They hated me without a cause.**

26 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send from the Father--the Spirit of truth who comes forth from Him--He will testify about me.

27 And you also will tell others about me, because you have been with me from the beginning.

27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

1. A warning to us not to take salvation for granted; and a direct contradiction to the false doctrine of, "Once saved, always saved."
2. A clarification to John 13:14, a verse which is easily misused by some Christians who take it too literally, without the wisdom that this verse shows must be used.
3. Better paraphrased as: "*If they have used my words against me, they'll use your words against you.*"
4. It is regrettable that in some circles of Christianity the view is still held, and sometimes articulated from the pulpit or microphone, that somehow there is a chance of salvation for sincere people who honestly, yet mistakenly, reject Christ. Once again, Jesus absolutely ties Father and Son together in a way that rejecting the Son automatically means rejecting the Father, whether one agrees with that notion or not.
5. "**Comforter**" is not a good translation. *Helper* would be a better understanding, though "**advocate**" (in the legal sense) is the precise meaning. In Hebrew, however, "**comforter**" would fit the word.

JOHN CHAPTER 16

1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.
 2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.
 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.
 4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.
 5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?
 6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.
 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him¹ unto you.
 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:
 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;
 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;
 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.
 12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.²
 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.
 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.
 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.
 16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.
 17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?
 18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.
 19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see

JOHN CHAPTER 16

1 I have told you these things so you do not [stumble in your faith]:
 2 They shall excommunicate you from the synagogues. The time will even come when those who kill you will think they are acting as agents of God and performing a religious act and obligation to Him.
 3 But they will all be doing these things because they have never known the Father *or* me.
 4 But I've told you these things so that when they happen, you'll remember I warned you about them. I did not tell you about them earlier because I was still with you.
 5 But now I am going back to Him who sent me, and none of you is asking, "Where are you going?"
 6 Yet because I have spoken these things, your hearts have been filled with sorrow.
 7 Nevertheless, I tell you truthfully that it is good for me to leave you, because if I do not, the Helper will not come to you. But if I leave you, I will send Him to you.
 8 And when He is come, He will confront the world about sin; about righteousness; and the coming judgment.
 9 Of sin: Because they do not believe on me.
 10 Of righteousness: Because I will return to the Father, and you will see me no more.
 11 Of Judgment: Because the prince of this world [--its god--] has been judged.
 12 I have many more things to tell you, but you cannot understand them yet.
 13 But after the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own accord, but He will speak the things He hears to you. He will also show you things to come.
 14 [He shall glorify me by revealing greater truths I tell Him to reveal that you cannot even fathom yet.]
 15 Everything the Father has is mine, therefore I said that He will take what is mine and reveal it to you.
 16 A little while, and you will not see me. But in a little while, you *will* see me because I go to the Father.
 17 Then some of the disciples said amongst themselves: What does he mean, "A little while, and you will not see me. But in a little while, you *will* see me because I go to the Father"?
 18 What's this, "A little while" talk? We don't understand.
 19 Jesus knew they were confused and wanted to ask him what he meant, so he said: Are you all trying to figure out what I meant by saying "A little while, and you will not see me. But in a little while, you *will* see me"?
 20 Truly, Truly I say to you: You will cry and mourn while the world rejoices. You will be filled with sorrow,

me?
 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.
 21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.
 22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.
 23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing³. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.
 24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.
 25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.
 26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:
 27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.
 28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.
 29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.
 30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.
 31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?
 32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.
 33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

but that sorrow will be turned into joy!
 21 A woman in labor is in great sorrow at the pain, but as soon as she delivers her baby, she forgets the pain because of the joy she feels at bringing a son into the world.
 22 Right now, you sorrow. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice--and that joy no man will ever take from you!
 23 In that day, you will have no more questions for me, and truly, truly I say to you: Whatever you thereafter ask the Father as my representatives He will give to you.
 24 Up to now, you have asked nothing on the basis of being my representatives. Ask now, on that basis, and you will receive so your joy will be full.
 25 I've been saying all these things in the proverbs I've been telling [but you haven't understood]. The time is coming when I will no longer speak in proverbs, but will speak plainly about the Father.
 26 In that day, you will make requests as my ambassadors, and I won't need to ask the Father *for* you,
 27 Because the Father Himself loves you because of your love *for me*, and for your belief that I came from Him.
 28 I came forth from the Father into this world, and now I leave the world to go back to the Father.
 29 His disciples now said: Finally, you speak plainly, without these confusing proverbs!
 30 Now we're sure you know and are revealing all things to us without needing to be asked. By this, we believe you came forth from God!
 31 Jesus answered: Do you really believe now?
 32 Behold, the hour comes that you will be scattered, each one running for his life, and shall abandon me. But I will not be alone, for the Father is with me.
 33 These things I have spoken to you so that in me you will have peace. In this life, in this world, you will have troubles. But be of good cheer--*I* have overcome the world [and *you* will overcome it through me].

1. It should be pointed out that the word "**Him**" is the only acceptable rendition of the Greek word here in this verse, leaving no textual justification for denying the Personhood of the Holy Spirit.
 2. A reference to such things as the Trinity, for certainly the humble Jewish apostles could not fathom some of the spiritual truths yet to be revealed by the Holy Spirit. (They can't even accept that the Messiah must die, for example.)
 3. Better paraphrased as: "*In that day, you will have no more questions for me,*" despite the traditional translation which seems to fit the next sentence. Two different words are used for "**ask**" in the two sentences; the first, meaning to ask a question; the second, meaning to make a request.

JOHN CHAPTER 17

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:
 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.
 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.¹
 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.
 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the

JOHN CHAPTER 17

1 Jesus spoke these things, then lifted his eyes up to heaven, saying: Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so he can glorify You,
 2 So that, as You have given him authority over every living thing, he will bestow eternal life to as many as You have given him.
 3 And this is eternal life: That they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.
 4 I have glorified You on earth by completing the work You gave me to do.
 5 And now, O Father, glorify me with Your own glory, the same glory I had with You before time began.
 6 I have displayed exactly what You are to these

world was.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition²; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

men--out of all the men in the world--that You gave to me. They were Your men, and You gave them to me. They have kept Your decrees.

7 [Now they know that everything I am, everything I do, and everything I say comes from You.]

8 I have given them the teachings You taught *me*, and they received them, being firmly persuaded that I came out from You, and that You sent me.

9 Now I pray for them. But I pray not for all the world, but only for those You have given me, for the ones You gave me are Yours,

10 And all of mine are Yours, and all of Yours are mine--and I am glorified in them [because of what they have done, and will do, on my behalf].

11 And now, I will no longer be present in this world, but these will be; and I come to You, Holy Father, asking You to keep and care for them through Who and What You are. Let them be in perfect unity just as You and I are.

12 While I was in the world, I kept them for You. Those You gave me I have kept safe, and not one has been lost but for Judas--the son of Perdition--so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now I come to You, and say these things while I am still in the world, that they may be partakers of my own joy in themselves.

14 I have given them Your Message, and the world hated them because they were not a part of the world any more than I was a part of the world.

15 I do not ask that You would take them out of the world; I ask that You would keep watch over, and protect them, from the Evil One.

16 They are not of the world as I am not of the world.

17 Now set them apart by Your truth, for Your Message is truth.

18 As You sent me into the world, even so I send them out into the world.

19 And for their sakes I devote myself wholly to You, that they might also be devoted wholly to You through the truth.

20 I also do not pray for them alone, but also for the ones who will come to believe through their testimony,

21 So that [throughout all ages] my followers may be one just as You, Father, are in me and I in You. Let them all be one in us so the world may believe that You sent me.

22 And the glory You gave me, I have given to them, so that they may be one as You and I are:

23 I in them, You in me, that they may be made complete and perfectly united, so the world will know that You have sent me and have loved them no less than You have loved me.

24 Father, I also desire and decree that those whom You have given me shall come to be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory that You gave me, for You loved me before time began.

25 O righteous Father, the world has not known You--but I have known You, and these whom You gave me have known that You sent me.

26 And I have declared who and what You are, and will continue to do so, that the love You have for me may be in them, and I be in them as well.

1. It is ultimately to this end that mankind was created by God: Not to carry out His will, not to serve Him, but to “**know**” Him, and through that to do the rest.

2. Judas.

JOHN CHAPTER 18

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden¹, into the which he entered, and his disciples.
 2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.
 3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.
 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?
 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.
 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he², they went backward, and fell to the ground.
 7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.
 8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:
 9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.
 10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.
 11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?³
 12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,
 13 And led him away to Annas first⁴; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.
 14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.
 15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest⁵, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.
 16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.
 17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.
 18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals⁶; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.
 19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.
 20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

JOHN CHAPTER 18

1 After Jesus had spoken these things, he and the disciples crossed the Kidron brook to a garden that he and the disciples entered.
 2 Judas, who betrayed him, knew about the place as well, for Jesus and the disciples often retreated there.
 3 So Judas, having been given a band of men and officials from the chief Sadducee priests and the Pharisees, advanced upon the place with lanterns, torches, and weapons.
 4 Jesus, knowing what lay ahead for him, stepped up and asked: Who are you looking for?
 5 They answered: Jesus of Nazareth! So Jesus said in return to them: I AM! And Judas, who betrayed him, stood with the crowd.
 6 When the words “I AM” left his mouth, the crowd fell back prostrate to the ground.
 7 Jesus then repeated: Who are you looking for? And again they said: Jesus of Nazareth.
 8 Jesus replied: I told you that I am, so if I'm whom you're looking for, let these others go their way.
 9 He said this to fulfill the prophecy he made at the Passover seder: *Those You gave me I have kept safe, and not one has been lost.*
 10 Then Shimon Peter, who had brought along a sword, drew it and attacked Malchus, a servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear.
 11 But Jesus stopped him, saying: Sheath your sword! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?
 12 Then the band of people led by their captain and the officers of the Judeans, bound Jesus,
 13 And led him first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year. [Then Annas sent him to Caiaphas' palace.]
 14 Now this same Caiaphas was the one who said to the Judeans, “It is better for one man to die for the people, that Israel itself does not die.”
 15 Meanwhile, Shimon Peter followed along from a distance, and so did John. Now John happened to be acquainted with Caiaphas, and so he slipped into his palace.
 16 But Peter halted at the gate, and John, who knew Caiaphas, went back and spoke to the girl who was the gatekeeper. Then Peter was allowed in as well.
 17 As Peter stepped in, the girl in charge of the gate asked: Aren't you also one of this man's disciples? But Peter said: I am not.
 18 Inside the courtyard, the servants and officers of the Temple had made a bonfire of coals, for it was cold, and Peter mingled among them, warming himself.
 19 The High Priest, Caiaphas, then questioned Jesus about who his disciples were, and what his doctrine was.
 20 Jesus replied to him: I spoke openly to everyone. I was always in the synagogue and the Temple where the Jews spend their time, and I have said nothing in secret.
 21 Why then do you ask me what I taught? Ask the ones who heard me. They know what I said.
 22 When he had spoken this, one of the officers standing by slapped Jesus across the face, saying: Is this how you

21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.
 22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?
 23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?
 24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.⁷
 25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.
 26 One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?
 27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.
 28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.⁸
 29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?
 30 They answered, and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.
 31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:⁹
 32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.
 33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?
 34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?
 35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?
 36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.
 37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.
 38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?¹⁰ And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.
 39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?
 40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas¹¹. Now Barabbas was a robber.

talk to the High Priest?!

23 Jesus replied: If I have said something insulting against him personally, point out the slander. If I have not insulted him personally, then why do you strike me?

24 Now this was taking place after Annas had bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the current High Priest.

25 As this was going on, Shimon Peter was standing at the fire, trying to keep warm. Some of those gathered there asked him: Aren't you also one of his disciples? But he denied it, saying: I am not!

26 One of the High Priest's servants, who was related to the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him: Didn't I see you in the garden with him?

27 Peter denied it again, and it was then that the "rooster" cried out.

28 Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman Hall of Judgment, even though it was early in the morning. But they did not go in themselves, lest they violate the oral Law and become ritually defiled, making them unable to eat the Passover lamb later that day.

29 So Pilate went out to them and asked: What accusations are you bringing against this man?

30 They answered: Take our word for it—if this man weren't a criminal, we wouldn't have brought him to you!

31 Pilate answered: Then you take him and judge him by your *own* law! The Judeans replied: The Law does not allow us to pass a death sentence [for only the Great Sanhedrin can do that].

32 This fulfilled what Jesus had said about the sort of death he would die [--that they would 'lift up' the Son of Man].

33 Then Pilate went back into the Judgment Hall and called Jesus to him, asking: Are you the King of the Jews?

34 Jesus replied: Are you asking that yourself, or did others *accuse* me of calling myself that?

35 Pilate answered: Am I a Judean? [I have no idea what this is all about!] Your own countrymen and chief priests brought you here. What have you done to so trouble them?

36 Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If it were of this world, my followers would have taken up arms and fought to keep me from being taken by the Judeans. But my kingdom is elsewhere.

37 Pilate's response to this was: So you *are* a king? Jesus replied: You are saying that I am a king [by what you are doing]. To this end I was born and came into the world, to bear witness of the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth hears my voice.

38 Pilate responded: [Truth?!] What *is* truth? Then he went out to the Judeans, and told them: I find no guilt in this man at all.

39 But you have a custom at the Passover [and other Festivals] that I grant clemency to a criminal. Do you wish me to release the "King of the Jews"?

40 Then they cried out: Not this man--give us bar Abbas! Now this bar Abbas was a robber [and revolutionary].

1. The word here for "garden" (*kepos*) is of uncertain origin, and may actually be related to a chasm or cave as well as a "garden." If this is the case, it suggests that Jesus would pray in a certain cave He was aware of.

2. It is not possible to say, in Hebrew, "I am," and the name of God does not literally mean that, but something like, "He who will be," "I will be," etc. Jesus here, once again, uses the power of the Ineffable Name with respect to Himself.

3. Some have wondered why Jesus earlier has the disciples arm themselves, yet now rebukes Peter for using the sword. The answer

is that Jesus meant for the apostles to defend themselves, not to protect Him through violence from accomplishing His ultimate task of crucifixion.

4. Annas, remember, is the power controlling the city of Jerusalem.

5. Just how John is so known to the house of Caiaphas is a mystery. Some have speculated that John must have been related to him.

6. We know by this it cannot be Thursday-Friday, Nisan 15 yet, for that day is a Sabbath, and kindling a fire is forbidden.

7. Some see a contradiction between John's Gospel and Matthew's here since John seems to indicate these events and Peter's denial occur at Annas' palace, while Matthew says it was at Caiaphas'. However, the Greek can theoretically be viewed as a past tense statement, a position taken by the KJV and this paraphrase to rectify the issue.

8. This prohibition is Pharisaic, tracing itself to Shammai's 18 edicts forcing separation between Jew and Gentile. Note there is some debate as to whether the Sadducees believed they would be defiled until sundown of the next day, or for seven whole days.

9. This statement is somewhat puzzling. There is insufficient evidence to believe that the right to try and execute Jewish criminals was reserved solely by the Romans, although the Jews clearly had no right to judge Roman citizens. We note that the elders moved quickly enough to attempt to stone Christ (John 10:31); we know from the Talmud that they executed a priest's daughter for adultery; and they stoned Stephen with Paul's approval. Some of the possibilities follow:

Only the Sanhedrin proper, headed by Gamaliel, had the authority to make a death sentence; the Sadducee Sanhedrin of Jerusalem lacked this authority. It should be noted that Gamaliel's Sanhedrin had been boycotting the *Chamber of Hewn Stone* in the Temple (the only spot a death sentence could legally be made) because the Romans held the priestly vestments, allowing them out only for Festivals, and then retrieving them afterward.

The group wants Jesus to be crucified by the Romans so that they can place the blame elsewhere if the population becomes enraged over it. (Luke 20:20.)

The group wants Jesus to die by the torment of crucifixion.

10. The apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* records an interesting response from Jesus to Pilate's question: "Believe that truth is on earth among those who, when they have the power of judgment, are governed by truth and form right judgment." If Jesus didn't say this, it sounds like something He *could* have said!

11. The name means: "Son of the father." It has been suggested the man was the son of a High Priest, though actual proof is lacking.

JOHN CHAPTER 19

1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.¹
 2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,
 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.
 4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.
 5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!
 6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.
 7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.
 8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;
 9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.
 10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?
 11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.
 12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend:² whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.
 13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

JOHN CHAPTER 19

1 Then Pilate had Jesus flogged,
 2 And the soldiers made a crown of thorns that they placed upon his head. Then they put a purple robe upon him,
 3 And said: Hail, King of the Jews! And they slapped him with their hands.
 4 After this, Pilate went out to the crowd again, and said: I am bringing him out now, and I want you to know I find him innocent of any wrongdoing.
 5 Then Jesus came out, the crown of thorns upon his head and dressed in the purple robe. Pilate said: Look at the man now! [Is this punishment enough to satisfy you?]
 6 When the chief priests and their officers saw him, they cried out: Crucify him! Crucify him! To this, Pilate responded: *You* crucify him! I find no guilt in him.
 7 The Judeans answered back: We have laws in our religion, and by our Torah he should die, because he appointed himself to be the "Son of God" [—the supposed Messiah, and king of Israel!]
 8 Now when Pilate heard this, he was all the more afraid.
 9 So he went out once more to the Judgment Hall and asked Jesus: Where did you come from? But Jesus was silent.
 10 Pilate added: You have nothing to say to me? Don't you know that, at my word, you can be crucified, or set free?
 11 Jesus answered: You could have no authority at all unless it came from Above. Thus, the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.
 12 From this point on, Pilate tried to find a way to release him, but the Judeans shouted out: If you free this man, you are not Caesar's friend! Anyone who makes himself a king challenges Caesar's authority!
 13 When Pilate heard that comment, he finally gave in and brought Jesus forth. Then he sat upon the judgment

14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour:³ and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

18 Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.⁴

20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

23 Then said the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.⁵

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.⁶

28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken,⁷ and that they might be taken away.

32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is

seat in a place called *the Pavement*, which in Aramaic is called *Gabbatha*.

14 And it was [close to 9 AM] on the preparation day of Passover. Pilate then said: Behold your "King."

15 But they began to shout: Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Pilate replied: Shall I crucify your "King"? Then the chief priests replied: We have no king but Tiberius Caesar!

16 Then Pilate gave up, and handed Jesus over to be crucified. So the soldiers led him off.

17 And he went, carrying his cross to a place outside the city called *the Place of the Skull*, which in Aramaic is *Golgotha*.

18 There, they crucified him along with two others, one on either side of him.

19 And Pilate hung a sign atop the cross that read: JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 The sign was in Aramaic as well as Greek and Latin, and many people read it, for the crucifixion site was close to the city [outside the east gate, where the red heifer was also sacrificed].

21 Then the chief priests of the Jews told Pilate: Don't write, *The King of the Jews*! Say instead that he *claimed to be King of the Jews*!

22 But Pilate replied: What I have written, I have written.

23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, divided up his four pieces of clothing, one for each legionnaire present. They also took his coat, which was of fine quality, being seamlessly knitted together,

24 And said: Let's not tear it apart, but dice for it. This fulfilled a prophecy in the Psalms that said: **They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.** Thus, the soldiers found themselves doing their part to fulfill prophecy.

25 Now at the cross of Jesus stood his mother Miriam and his mother's sister, who was also named Miriam—though she was the wife of Cleopas. Mary of Magdala was also there.

26 When Jesus beheld his mother standing there with John, the disciple whom he loved, he told his mother: Woman, behold your son.

27 Then he said to John: Behold your mother. And from that day on, Miriam lived under his roof.

28 After this, Jesus—knowing that he had done all that he needed to do—did one last thing. So to fulfill the Scriptures, he said: I thirst.

29 Now someone had brought along a jar full of non-kosher Roman *posca* [vinegar wine]. So they dipped a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop stick, and lifted it up to his mouth.

30 When Jesus received the *posca*, he said: It is finished! Then he lowered his head and gave up his spirit to death.

31 Meanwhile, the Judeans—because it was the Preparation Day—asked Pilate to break the legs, and finish off those crucified, because they did not want the bodies hanging overnight [for the next day was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a High Sabbath that fell upon the weekly Sabbath].

32 So the soldiers broke the legs of those on either side of Jesus.

33 But when they saw Jesus was already dead, they did

true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.
 36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.
 37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.⁸
 38 And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.
 39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.
 40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.
 41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.
 42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

not break his legs.
 34 One of the soldiers, however, thrust a spear into his side, and out came a flow of blood and water.
 35 John the disciple saw all this, and his record of it is true, and is written down so you can also believe it is true.
 36 All this happened so that the Scripture could be fulfilled that said, **A bone of him shall not be broken.**
 37 And another verse of Scripture says, **They shall look on him whom they pierced.**
 38 After all this, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus—but a secret one because of his fear of the Judean leaders—begged Pilate to let him have Jesus' body. Pilate agreed, and he came and took down the body of Jesus from the cross.
 39 Nicodemus, the man who first met Jesus by night, came with him, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds.
 40 Then they took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in a linen shroud with the spices, which is how the Judeans bury their dead.
 41 Now near the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden, and in it a new tomb [that had never been defiled by anyone else's body being placed in it].
 42 They hurriedly laid Jesus within this convenient tomb because the Jewish preparation day was at hand.

1. Not with 39 stripes, but with Roman flagellation, opening up a victim from head to toe with the barbs of the *flagrum*.
2. If the traditional date of the Crucifixion is correct (33 AD), on Pilate's mind is the recent treason of the Praetorian Lucius Aelius Sejanus, and the accompanying actions of Tiberius in 31 AD, executing anyone suspected of collusion. Pilate owed his position to Sejanus, and he dared not arouse even the slightest suspicion of the Emperor.
3. It will be noted that John differs from the other Gospel writers in placing the Crucifixion at the 6th hour, compared to the 3rd hour. The usual explanation is that he is using Roman time, whereas the other writers use the Jewish manner of reckoning time. However, this notion does not seem to jibe with other incidents earlier in John's Gospel. John may have switched from Jewish reckoning to Roman for the events of the Crucifixion.
4. See the commentary under Matthew 27:37.
5. Mary Magdalene is traditionally—and unjustifiably—viewed as a former prostitute. If her name indicates she was from the city of Magdala, near Tiberius, it is true that the city had a reputation for prostitutes. However, other possibilities are that the tag *Magdalene* may refer to a hairdresser, or even to the fishing trade.
6. As noted in the other Gospel commentaries, Jesus giving Mary over to John is unthinkable if she has other living sons. Also, we know the apostles forsook all to follow Christ, so it is doubtful John literally possessed a house for Mary to live in. They probably resided with friends or relatives, and this is why Mary is staying in the Upper Room with John in Acts 1.
7. Verses 26 and 27 are also used by Catholics to establish the notion that Mary is to be treated as the spiritual mother of humanity, to be viewed as the mother of all Christians. This notion is quickly refuted by 1st Peter 3:6, where Peter, ostensibly the first pope, tells Christian women they are in fact *Sarah's* daughters if they submit to their husbands, and live without fear!
8. Although often taught that this was a method of fast execution by breaking the legs to prevent the victim from being able to stand up enough to take in air, it was primarily a method of torture reserved for those being allowed to cheat the days that crucifixion could otherwise take to slay their victim. After a few minutes of suffering, the victims, if still alive, were finished off with a spear as you see happens to Jesus, who is already dead.
8. This is an interpolation of Zechariah 12:10, which actually says: "**They shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced.**" Once again, clear indication that Jesus was co-equal and co-identifiable with the Father since the verse in context refers to God.

JOHN CHAPTER 20

1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark¹, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.
 2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.
 3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.
 4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.
 5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

JOHN CHAPTER 20

1 Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb and found the stone rolled away.
 2 Then she ran to Shimon Peter and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them: They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have laid him!
 3 Peter and John thus set out to and ran to the tomb.
 4 They ran as fast as they could, but John [—being younger and faster than Peter—] got there first,
 5 And he stooped down to peer inside. He saw the linen wraps lying there, but he did not go in.
 6 Then Shimon Peter, following behind, arrived and

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,
 7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.
 8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.
 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.²
 10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.
 11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,
 12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.³
 13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.
 14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.
 15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.
 16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.
 17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.
 18 Mary Magdalene came, and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.
 19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.
 20 And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.
 21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.
 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:
 23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.⁴
 24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.
 25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.
 26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.
 27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger,

went straight into the tomb, where he also looked over the linen wraps lying.
 7 He also saw the linen piece that had been wrapped about his head folded up by itself and laid to the side.
 8 Then John, who arrived there first, entered in--and he realized what he was beholding, and believed.
 9 But they still didn't understand the Scriptures that revealed Jesus must rise again from the dead.
 10 Then the disciples left and returned home.
 11 However, Mary of Magdala stood outside the tomb, weeping. As she cried, she stooped down and looked inside the tomb.
 12 Inside, she beheld two angels in white sitting [facing each other in the form of the Ark of the Covenant]. One was at the head, and the other was at the feet of where the body of Jesus had lain.
 13 And they asked her: Woman, why are you weeping? She answered them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him.
 14 And when she had said this, she glanced over her shoulder and saw a man standing nearby. She didn't know it was Jesus.
 15 Jesus said to her: Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for? Mary, supposing he was the gardener, said to him: Sir, if you have taken him someplace, tell me where, and I will go and take him from there.
 16 Jesus then called out: Mary! And she turned toward him, exclaiming: *Rabboni*; which is to say, *Great Master*!
 17 Jesus told her: You must let me go, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them: "I go to ascend to my Father, and your Father, and my God, and your God!"
 18 So Mary of Magdala went, and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and she repeated what he had told her.
 19 That same Sunday at evening, when the doors were shut and barred, with the disciples hiding in fear from the Judeans, Jesus appeared and stood in their midst. He announced: Peace be to you!
 20 After saying this, he displayed the wounds in his wrists and his side--and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.
 21 Then Jesus repeated: Peace be to you! As my Father has sent me, so I now send you.
 22 And when he had said this, he breathed upon them [as God had done to Adam in the beginning], and said: Receive the Holy Spirit!
 23 Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven. Whose sins you do not forgive, they remain.
 24 Now one of the twelve, Thomas, called *Didymus* ["the Twin"], wasn't there when Jesus came.
 25 When he arrived, the others told him: We have seen the Lord! But he refused to believe it, saying: I won't believe unless I see the nail holes in his wrists, the spear wound in his side, and I put my fingers into the wounds!
 26 Eight days later the doors were still shut in the house, and the disciples were still there. But this time Thomas was with them. Then Jesus appeared amongst them, and said: Peace be to you!
 27 Then he said to Thomas: Come here, and stick your

and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.
 28 And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord and my God.
 29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.
 30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:
 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

finger into my wrists, and thrust it into my side so you will be believing instead of faithless!
 28 Thomas [shaken to the core] exclaimed: My Lord and my God!
 29 Jesus said in return: Thomas, you have believed because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen, but who will still believe!
 30 Jesus did many other things in the presence of his disciples that are not written down here.
 31 But *these* things have been written so that you can continue to have faith that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, and that by having this faith, you will have eternal life through who and what he is!

1. A good, but not compelling, case can be made that the various Gospel accounts suggest that the women come to the tomb as the Sabbath ends at sundown Saturday rather than Sunday morning as is traditionally understood. This argument most often crops up between Sabbatarians and those who think the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. As I point out elsewhere, it is wholly irrelevant because Gentile Christians were never required to observe the Sabbath regardless of the day. The "change" to a Sunday Sabbath probably came about as separate worship services were set up for the Gentile believers who were out of place in the Synagogue.
 2. Meaning that their minds were spiritually darkened in a manner that they did not understand the Scriptures on this issue.
 3. They were arranged similarly to the angels that decorated the top of the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant.
 4. This is a very troublesome verse for Protestantism. There are only two good possibilities as to what Jesus may be saying:
 Jesus is instituting some form of sacramental forgiveness for the penalty for sin, which is performed by those in the church.
 Jesus is saying that if the apostles forgive the sins personally committed against them, God will forgive the offender as well (Acts 7:60).
 Of the two, the first theory is the more likely since forgiveness is not optional with the Christian. Now the question will arise as to whether this affirms the Catholic and Orthodox notion of the sacrament of Confession. The answer is a definite...*probably not*. The practice is not shown in the Gospels (in fact, Jesus gives an example in Luke 18:13-14, of a sinner receiving forgiveness with no human mediator by crying out to God alone for mercy), in Acts, or the epistles, nor can it be substantiated by 1st century sources like the *Didache* (which does allude to a public confession of sin, not entirely inconsistent with what Jews were known to do), leaving it to the 2nd century *Shepherd of Hermas*, and later sources, to outline and develop it into the form it came to exist in. We also note that in virtually every instance where *Jesus* forgives someone's sins it is done in connection with physical healing, and not in the sense of the Confessional. (In fact, we see no instances of *anyone* coming to Jesus and confessing sins in a desire specifically for absolution.) Now evangelicals *would* agree that we confess our sins to the priest, and seek forgiveness *through* him—but we would say that our priest is Jesus, and the sacrifice He makes for our atonement is His death on the cross.

JOHN CHAPTER 21

1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberius; and on this wise showed he himself.
 2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.
 3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing.¹ They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.
 4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.
 5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.
 6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.
 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.
 8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.
 9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.
 10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

JOHN CHAPTER 21

1 After all this, Jesus again appeared to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee, and this is how it happened:
 2 Shimon Peter, Thomas the twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were gathered together.
 3 Shimon Peter said to them: I'm going fishing. The others responded: We'll go with you. So they got in a boat and went out onto the lake. They fished all night long, but could catch nothing.
 4 When morning came, Jesus appeared on shore but they did not know it was he.
 5 Jesus called out to them: Boys—have you caught any fish? They shouted back: No!
 6 Then he told them: Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you'll catch some! They did as he said, and the net became so full of fish that they could not pull it into the boat!
 7 It was then that John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, told Peter: It's the Lord! When Shimon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he threw on his tunic, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake, swimming for shore.
 8 The others rowed to shore in their small boat, being about a hundred yards distant, dragging the net and its fish with them.
 9 As soon as they landed, they beheld a fire of coals already prepared with some fish cooking on them. There was also some bread.
 10 Jesus told them: Bring some of the fish you've caught.

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three²; and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.
 12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.
 13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.
 14 This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.
 15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.
 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.
 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.³
 18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.
 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.
 20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?
 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?
 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.⁴
 23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?⁵
 24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.⁶
 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

11 Shimon Peter then went over and single-handedly drew the net onto the shore. It was filled with a hundred and fifty-three large fish! Even so, the net did not break.
 12 Jesus told them: Come and eat. None of the disciples, meanwhile, presumed to ask, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.
 13 Jesus then came up, took some bread, and distributed it to the disciples along with the fish.
 14 This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he had risen from the dead.
 15 After they had eaten, Jesus turned to Shimon Peter, and asked: Shimon, son of Jonah, do you love me with your whole being--more than you do fishing? Peter answered: Yes, Lord, you know I love you [like my dearest friend]. To this, Jesus told him: Feed my little sheep.
 16 Then Jesus said to him a second time: Shimon, son of Jonah, do you love me with your whole being? Peter again answered: Yes, Lord, you know I love you [like my dearest friend]! So Jesus said: Shepherd my little sheep.
 17 Jesus now asked him a third time: Shimon, son of Jonah, do you love me? Peter was now grieved that Jesus had asked a third time "Do you love me?" So he said back: Lord--you know all things. You know I love you! Jesus said: Feed my little sheep!
 18 Truly, truly, I say to you: When you were young, you would put a belt on and go to wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will put a belt around you and then take you where you won't want to go.
 19 Jesus spoke this to signify the sort of death Peter would have that would glorify God. Then he added: Follow me!
 20 Peter then turned back and spotted the disciple whom Jesus loved--the one who had leaned on Jesus' breast and asked: 'Lord, who is it that will betray you?'
 21 Glancing back at him, Peter asked: What will happen to *John*, Lord?
 22 Jesus responded: If I desire that he remain alive until my return, what business is that of yours? You follow me!
 23 Then an incorrect oral tradition circulated amongst the brethren that John would not die [before Jesus' return to earth]. But Jesus did not tell Peter, "He won't die"; he said, "If I desire that he remain alive until my return, what business is that of yours?"
 24 I John, am the one testifying about these things, and am the one who wrote them down. [And we know his testimony is true!]
 25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did in his life--so many, in fact, that I don't think that the world could contain all the books it would take to write them down in! Amen.

1. The tone suggests that it could be less Peter's deciding to go fishing because he has nothing better to do, and possibly that he was returning to being a fisherman.

2. It is thought that there were approximately 153 known nations at this point in history. The Church Fathers came up with a variety of proposed symbolism for this number otherwise. It is also commonly missed that Peter here is performing a miracle by single-handedly hauling a net to shore that the other disciples couldn't lift into the boat earlier!

3. The English fails to properly convey the words used here for *love*. The following shows the conversation more clearly:

Jesus: Peter, do you *agapan* me more than these?

Peter: Lord, I *philein* you.

Jesus: Peter, do you *agapan* me?

Peter: Lord, you know that I *philein* you.

Jesus: Peter, do you *philein* me?

Peter: Lord, I *philo* you.

Jesus would be understood along the lines of saying, "Peter, do you love me with the same love you have for God?" Peter would then be responding: "Well, I love you, Lord," stopping short of acknowledging an absolute, committed love. He is thus challenging Peter to a greater love than mere friendship. Additionally, when Jesus asks if Peter loves Him "**more than these**," it is written in the neuter form, and refers not to whether Peter loves Christ more than the other apostles, but whether he loves Christ more than fish and fishing.

As to why Jesus asks Peter the question three times, it is because there were three calls upon his life:

To be chief among the 12 (or to be the first Pope if you're Catholic).

To be the first to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

To be crucified.

4. In other words, "Don't you worry about John--worry about yourself, Peter!"

5. A very important verse showing that the apostles did not orally teach infallibly! This misunderstanding of Jesus' words was purposeful, for by their incorrectly believing Jesus would return within only a few years, many of the them worked that much harder to advance the Kingdom. If they had known it would be 2000 years, they probably would have been far more lax.

6. The last part of this verse was probably written by faithful followers of John in Ephesus.

Acts

The Book of Acts was written around 60-63 AD for the man Theophilus, who was the recipient of Luke's earlier Gospel.

ACTS CHAPTER 1

1 The former treatise¹ have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:
3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:
4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.
5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.
6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.
8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost² is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.
10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;
11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.³
12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey⁴.
13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room⁵, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.
14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus⁶, and with his brethren.
15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about and hundred and twenty⁷.)
16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

ACTS CHAPTER 1

1 **I**n the Gospel I wrote to you earlier, O Theophilus, I set down in writing an account of all that *Jesus* began to do and teach,
2 Until the day he was received back into heaven, after he--through the Holy Spirit--had given final orders to the apostles whom he had chosen.
3 It was to these same apostles that Jesus showed himself alive after his suffering and death on the cross for forty days afterward by many infallible proofs as he discoursed about the Kingdom of God.
4 At one point, when he was with them as a group, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak of.
5 "For John truly 'baptized with water,' but you will be baptized with the *Holy Spirit* not many days from now!"
6 Now when the disciples were gathered together at one point, they asked him: [Lord--will you *now* free Israel from Rome?]
7 But he answered: It is none of your business to know what the Father has in mind, and when He will do it.
8 All you need to know is that you will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will testify about me throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then the uttermost parts of the world! [However, you will see, as our story develops, that the apostles did not immediately do this, and that God had to light a fire under them to actually get them to go out and *spread* the Gospel as Jesus had commanded.]
9 Now after Jesus had said these things, they watched as he ascended until he was lost to view in a cloud of glory.
10 And while they gazed, awestruck, toward heaven, two men in white robes appeared, standing by them.
11 They said: You men of Galilee--why do you stand and gaze up toward heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken from you up to heaven, will return in similar manner.
12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is under a mile from Jerusalem and within the amount of distance a Jew can travel on the Sabbath.
13 When they reached the city, they entered an upper room in a house where they lodged. Those staying there included: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Jude the brother of James.
14 These all, with one heart, devoted themselves to prayer with some of Jesus' women followers, along with Miriam his mother, and his kinsmen.
15 During this period, Peter stood up amongst the hundred and twenty [chief] disciples of Jesus, and said:
16 Men and brothers: There is a prophecy that must be

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.
 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity⁸; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.⁹
 19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, The field of blood.
 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.
 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,
 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.
 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.
 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,
 25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.
 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

fulfilled, which David made under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit regarding Judas--the betrayer who guided the mob to Jesus.

17 For he was numbered among us, and was a part of this ministry.

18 [As was prophesied,] Judas wound up *purchasing the potter's field with his blood money*. And [--as his body hung on the tree until the rope broke--] he fell down headlong, and burst his bowels.

19 Note: Everyone living in Jerusalem knew about this, and they even named the field *Aceldama*, which, in the native tongue, means the *Blood Field*.

20 [Peter continued:] For it is written in the Psalms, **Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and ...his bishoprick let another take.**

21 So I suggest that from amongst the group of followers here who have been a part of our group during Jesus' ministry,

22 Who were with us from the time of John's baptism until Jesus was taken up from us, that we choose and ordain one of them to replace Judas, and give testimony of Jesus' resurrection along with us.

23 So they selected two worthy candidates: Joseph called bar Sabbas, surnamed Justus; and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, saying: You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men--show which of these two you want for this position,

25 So he can participate in the ministry and apostleship from which Judas, through his sin, fell so he could go to his own true place [in hell].

26 So they cast lots, and Matthias won, joining the eleven as the twelfth apostle [replacing Judas].

1. Presumed to be the Gospel of Luke.

2. It is important to note that the doctrine of the Trinity is not fully understood by the apostles yet, and that the Holy Spirit in this point in time is understood to be a euphemism for "the power of God," or "the inspiration of God," and the apostles understand His words to be saying they shall receive power (i.e., miracle-working power) after the Power of God comes upon them.

3. A point missed by most is the fact that when Jesus ascended into heaven, He arose with a "shout," "the voice of the archangel," and the "trump of God," since 1 Thess. 4:16 says this is how He returns, and this passage says Jesus will return in like manner as He left.

4. Probably meaning 2000 cubits, although in Exodus 16:29, the literal commandment seems to forbid leaving one's house at all. By the time of Christ, however, rabbinic rulings had broadened this to the point that one could travel several miles under certain conditions.

5. This reference to "an upper room" has given birth to a common false belief about the events of Acts 2, which will be dealt with in the commentary notes for that chapter. The complete understanding of this notation is that this is simply where some of the apostles were staying in Jerusalem, and nothing more.

6. This is the last mention of Mary.

7. This number is suspiciously low. Since the Gospels record that the elders feared an uprising of the people if they took Jesus during the Passover because "the world is gone after him" (John 12:19), it is mind-boggling to number the followers of Christ at a paltry 120 members, especially as Paul (1 Cor. 15:6) mentions 500 believers. In all probability, this number refers not to the believers in Jerusalem, but to the number of apostles and elders in the faith, including those from amongst the 70 disciples Jesus sent out in the Gospels. These elders may eventually have become a Christian Sanhedrin over time, and the number of 120 coincidentally equals the number of men in the *Anshei Knesset ha Gedolah*, a Jewish quorum of the 2nd Temple period that made rabbinic clarifications to the Torah. This notion is given some credence by the fact that this group of 120 vote to elect Matthias to replace Judas, and we can presume it likely that only those who were long-term believers would have been qualified to choose between the two men. Note also that Peter uses the word "us" in verse 21, suggesting that this group has been with Christ from the time of John's ministry, adding further credence to the idea that they are elders of the church, and not a mixed group of apostles and lay people.

8. Recall that blood money can only be used for public works, and so this is why the Sadducees purchase a burial field with it.

9. Incorrectly thought by some to be a "contradiction" to the account in Matthew that Judas went out and hung himself. But since Judas hung himself during Passover, his corpse was undisturbed for days afterward due to religious prohibitions against touching a dead body. Finally, the rope broke and his body fell down, resulting in the unpleasant sight Peter refers to.

ACTS CHAPTER 2

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.¹
 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as

ACTS CHAPTER 2

1 Now when the 50 days to count for the Feast of Pentecost [*Shavuot*] were accomplished, they were in one accord [at the Temple].

of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.²
 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.
 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.
 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?⁴
 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?
 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,
 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.
 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?
 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.⁵
 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven⁶, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.⁷
 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:
 19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:
 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:
 21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.
 22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:
 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:
 24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

accord [at the Temple].
 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire [Court of Women] where they were sitting.
 3 And [--as had happened at Sinai when the Law was given--] cloven tongues of fire appeared upon their heads.
 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in different languages as the Spirit enabled them to.
 5 At this time, devout Jews from across the world were staying in Jerusalem for the Feast.
 6 When they heard the noise, the crowd came to investigate, and they were puzzled because everyone heard them speaking in their own languages.
 7 They were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another: Look--aren't those people speaking all Galileans?
 8 How is it we all hear them speaking fluently in our native languages?
 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, [Hebrew-speaking] Judeans, those from Cappadocia, Pontus, and Turkey,
 10 Phrygians, Pamphylians, Egyptians, Libyans from around Cyrene, and strangers from Rome, Jews and proselytes,
 11 Cretes and Arabians--all of us hear them talking, in fluent dialects, about the wonderful deeds of God!
 12 And they were amazed and dumbfounded, asking each other: What does this all mean?!
 13 Others, mocking, said: These men are full of sweet wine!
 14 But Peter, arising with the eleven other apostles, proclaimed: You men of Judea, and all you who dwell in Jerusalem--know this, and give attention to my words!
 15 These are not drunk as you think, since it's only the third hour of the day.
 16 But this is an example of what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
 17 **And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your son and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:**
 18 **And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:**
 19 **And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:**
 20 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:**
 21 **And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**
 22 You men of Israel, listen carefully! You all know about Jesus the Nazarene--a man who proved he had God's approval by the miracles, wonders and signs he performed among you.
 23 This same Jesus, who was allowed to fall into your hands by God's sovereign foreknowledge and will, you took and--using the wicked Romans to do your dirty work--crucified and murdered.
 24 But God raised him up, having freed him from the

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:
 26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:
 27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
 28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.
 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.
 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;
 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell⁸, neither his flesh did see corruption.
 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.
 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.
 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.
 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?
 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.⁹
 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.
 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized:¹⁰ and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.
 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.
 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,
 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such

pangs of death, because it was not possible that the grave could hold him back.

25 David prophesied about this, saying: **I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:**

26 **Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:**

27 **Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Sheol], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**

28 **Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.**

29 Men and brothers, let me speak freely about the Patriarch David, who is dead and buried, and whose tomb is here to this day.

30 David, being a prophet, and knowing that God had made an oath that a descendant of his—physically speaking—would be raised up as Messiah to sit upon his throne,

31 Foresaw and wrote that the same Messiah would die and be resurrected from the dead so his soul would not be left in *Sheol*, neither would his flesh rot and turn to bones.

32 It is this same Jesus that God resurrected, and we are all witnesses to it!

33 Therefore Jesus, having been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of [authority to baptize in] the Holy Spirit, has now sent forth this demonstration of Holy Spirit as you see and hear.

34 For *David* is not the one who ascended into the heavens, as he admitted when he wrote: **The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou of my right hand,**

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore, let all the house of Israel know, in no uncertain terms, that God has made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!

37 Now when the crowd heard these words, they were struck to the core with the implications of all this, and they asked Peter and the other apostles: Men and brothers—what shall we do?

38 Then Peter responded: Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins—and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit!

39 For this promise is made to you, your children, and to all [the Gentiles] that are “**afar off**,” as many as the Lord our God will call!

40 Peter continued on with many other words, testifying about Jesus and exhorting the people: Save yourselves from this perverted generation [that Jesus prophesied would reap the judgment of God].

41 Then those who joyfully responded to the message were baptized, and that same day three thousand new souls were added to the Messianic community.

42 And they walked zealously in the apostles' doctrines, fellowshiping together, [taking Communion], and praying constantly.

43 Awe came upon everyone, for the apostles performed numerous signs and wonders.

44 And all the believers were like brothers, and called none of their possessions their own,

45 But sold their goods and possessions, distributing the proceeds to everyone who was in lack.

46 And they worshipped daily in the Temple in one

as should be saved.

accord, [taking Communion], and eating the love feast at various homes in a spirit of joy and absolute singleness of heart [and mind],

47 All the while praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord daily added to the church as many as who were destined to be saved.

1. There is an absolute distinction between the “**one place**” listed in verse 1 here and the reference to “**an upper room**” in the last chapter. The group was almost certainly gathered in Solomon’s Porch (Acts 5:12) off the Court of Women, or in the Court of Women itself since that court was the only place where commoners could “**sit**” in the Temple. As the text notes in 3:11, Solomon’s Porch was the group’s usual gathering place. The fact that the word “**house**” is used in no way substantiates the notion this event takes place in the Upper Room. *The House* was a term for the Temple.

2. This awesome event takes place during Pentecost and would have had incredible significance to the Jews who observed it. What we call *Pentecost* was the Jewish Festival of *Shavuot*, which, although the culmination of an agricultural Festival, also commemorated the giving of the Law at Sinai. *Shavuot* means “weeks,” and refers to a seven-week period after Passover in which the Jewish people sanctify themselves to represent Israel’s existing as a holy nation.

Jewish legend held that at the time the Law was given on Mount Sinai, the voice of God issued forth in all known languages and visibly formed as tongues of fire upon the heads of all who were present. Each was then asked personally if he would abide by the terms of the Law.

The Jews would have seen this as a direct parallel with the most important event of Jewish history, and some would have understood it to mean that the Kingdom of God had come to earth, and that the Law was now being written in the hearts of the people as prophesied in the Old Testament. It is at this time that the *Chabod*, the radiance or Glory Cloud of God, comes upon the apostles, manifesting in tongues of fire, while the Holy Spirit now activates His power through the apostles that will enable them to do great works, but more importantly to witness for Christ. A by-product of this is that the Holy Spirit manifests Tongues, and enables the apostles to praise God supernaturally, speaking languages they do not normally know.

Some other interesting facts about Pentecost

Pentecost commemorates the marriage of God to Israel, and by extension Christ to His church.

The apostles would have stayed up all of the night before, praying and studying the Torah.

All would have been dressed in white.

It was by tradition the birthday of King David.

3. The foreigners are in Jerusalem because Pentecost/Shavuot is one of the three Festivals (the others being Pentecost and Tabernacles) during which the Jews are commanded to appear in the Holy City.

4. Further substantiation that these are not “120 believers from the Upper Room,” but the 12 Galilean apostles, and perhaps a few others.

5. Should be translated as: “**Sweet wine**.” It is incorrectly rendered as “**new**” wine because the wine was sweetest when newly made. Also, note that the crowd accuses them of being drunk on *gleukos*, which is incorrectly thought by some to be grape juice!

6. Note again that Peter doesn’t stand up with 120 believers, but only the “**eleven**” are specifically mentioned as being present.

7. It is noteworthy that the power of the Spirit upon the believers appears to the onlookers as something akin to human drunkenness. Despite the assertions of some, it is preposterous to believe that those observing the apostles equated Galileans speaking in known human languages with drunken behavior.

8. A false doctrine has arisen in Pentecost because of verses like this, which holds that Jesus went to hell and atoned for sin there. That doctrine is unsubstantiated by Scripture and is ultimately formed by misunderstanding an English translation of Greek text. The word here is *Hades*, the abode of the dead, not *Gehenna*, the flames of hell.

9. Yet another false doctrine arising both in and out of Pentecost is derived from *this* verse, asserting that forgiveness of sin is not accomplished except through baptism. However, baptism is simultaneous with repentance in the culture, and this is the basis upon which Peter makes his comments that otherwise could seem to suggest that baptism literally washes away sin. As we read through the writings of Paul, who breaks down the salvation process on a forensic level, we see a clarification lacking in other apostolic writings that baptism does not literally wash away sin, but rather is an outward response to an inward belief of faith. Romans 4:4, in fact, clearly declares this principle when it notes that Abraham received circumcision not as an efficacious act, but as only an outward sign of the righteousness and justification he already had beforehand.

10. More evidence these events take place at the Temple—only the Temple *mikvah* facilities could have handled baptizing 3000 converts at a time.

ACTS CHAPTER 3

1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.
2 And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful¹, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;
3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.
4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.
5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

ACTS CHAPTER 3

1 One day, Peter and John went to the Temple for the daily prayers at 3 PM.
2 There was a certain man being carried, who had been born crippled, that every day was laid by the Beautiful Gate to beg alms from those going into the Temple.
3 When he saw Peter and John walking up to enter the Temple, he automatically held up his bowl, asking for alms.
4 Peter, setting his gaze on him along with John, said: Look at us!
5 This caught the man’s attention, and he looked over at the two, expecting them to give him some money.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.
 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.
 8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.
 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:
 10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.
 11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.
 12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?
 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.
 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer² to be granted unto you;
 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.
 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.
 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.
 18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.
 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out³, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;
 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:
 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.
 22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.
 23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.
 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.
 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.
 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of

6 But Peter said: Silver and gold I have none of--but what I *do* have, I give to you: In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!
 7 Then he grasped the man by the right hand, and pulled him to his feet. As he did this, the beggar's feet and ankles were strengthened to bear his weight!
 8 Leaping up, the man stood, walked, and then followed Peter and John into the Temple court, walking, jumping, and shouting praises to God.
 9 Everyone there saw him walking and praising God,
 10 And they knew this was the man who regularly sat and begged alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; and they were awestruck at what had happened to him.
 11 And as the man who had been healed embraced Peter and John, all the people hurried over to Solomon's Porch, astonished at what was going on.
 12 When Peter saw the crowd gathering, he spoke to the people, saying: You men of Israel--why are you surprised at this? Or why are you staring at us, as if--through our own power or holiness--we are the ones who made him walk?
 13 The God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did this to glorify His son Jesus--the one whom you gave over to Pilate and denied in the governor's face when he was determined to let him go.
 14 You denied the holy and Just One, and asked for a murderer [--bar Abbas--] to be released to you;
 15 And you [people of Jerusalem] killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead. We are witnesses to that fact!
 16 And it is through faith in the person and position of Jesus that made this man, whom you all see and have known, strong enough to walk! Yes, faith which is through Jesus made him perfectly sound, and this happened before your very eyes!
 17 Now brothers, I know that it was through ignorance that you rejected Jesus, as also did your rulers.
 18 But these things, bad as they were, happened to fulfill what God had prophesied through the mouths of the prophets: that the Messiah would suffer--and he has thus fulfilled those prophecies!
 19 Repent now, all of you, and turn to God so your sins may truly be blotted out, and God will send you the appointed times of [spiritual] refreshment,
 20 And also send back this same Jesus Christ we've been preaching about to you.
 21 But for now, heaven has received him until the times of complete restoration of all things God foretold by the mouths of all His holy prophets since the world began comes to pass.
 22 Truly, Moses warned our ancestors when he said: **A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.**
 23 **And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.**
 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel onward, have likewise foretold these times we're in.
 25 You are the descendants of the prophets, and inheritors of the covenant that God made with our ancestors when He told Abraham: **And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.**

you from his iniquities.

26 It was to you first that God raised up and sent His son Jesus to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities.

1. Most scholars identify this as what is otherwise known as the Nicanor gate, a huge edifice that separated the Court of Gentiles from the Court of Women. That gate, named for a Greek captain slain by the Hasmoneans, was magnificently beautiful, around 50 feet wide and 60 feet tall, having been crafted in Corinth from bronze polished so brightly that it looked as if the gates were made of gold. A new theory holds that the true rendering of the text should be the "ripe gate," referring to a different gate through which fruit offerings passed during the Feast of Tabernacles.

2. Barabbas.

3. Note that baptism isn't mentioned in connection with the blotting out of sin!

ACTS CHAPTER 4

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.¹

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.²

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth

ACTS CHAPTER 4

1 As they continued to preach to the people, the priests, the Levite in charge of the guards, and the Sadducees, accosted Peter and John.

2 They were furious that the two were teaching doctrines affirming resurrection from the dead [—a belief they denied—] using Jesus as proof of it.

3 So they dragged Peter and John off, and locked them away until morning, for it was now dusk.

4 But before they did this around five thousand men believed the message about Jesus.

5 Now the next day, the city rulers, the Jewish elders, the Torah teachers,

6 Together with the former High Priest Annas, the current High Priest Caiaphas—with John, Alexander, and the rest of Caiaphas' kinsmen—gathered at Jerusalem [and formed a sanhedrin to deal with the issue].

7 When they had brought Peter and John [along with the healed man] and stood them up in their midst, they demanded to know: Through what sort of power, or as whose representatives, have you done this miracle?

8 Then Peter, filled with the [wisdom and boldness of] the Holy Spirit, answered: You rulers of the people, and elders of Israel:

9 If you're inquiring of us today as to how the good deed of this crippled man being healed and made whole occurred,

10 Be it known to you, and all Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, and whom God raised from the dead—by *him* does this man now stand before you whole!

11 This is *the stone rejected by you builders that has become the chief cornerstone!*

12 Neither is there salvation in any other name, for there is no other name given under heaven to men by which we can be saved!

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and understood that they were lay people with no religious training from any known *yeshiva* of Israel, they were amazed; and they noted them as having been disciples of Jesus.

14 And seeing the man standing there [whom everyone in town knew was the beggar from the Beautiful Gate], they had no answer to explain away this miracle.

15 But when they ordered the three out from the council chamber, they conferred among themselves,

16 And said: What shall we do to these men? [We thought that when Jesus died, this would all be over, but] they have done an amazing miracle in front of everyone in Jerusalem, and we can't explain our way around it!

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us

to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered, and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet³: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land⁴, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

threaten them, and order them not to speak or teach to anyone in the name of Jesus.

18 Then they called Peter and John back into the chamber, and ordered them to stop all evangelizing and teaching in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John stood up to them and replied: You tell us--do you think God would have us obey you rather than Him?

20 We have seen what we have seen, and have heard what we have heard, and God forbid we do other than shout it from the housetops!

21 So after the council threatened them further, they released them because they could think of no charge to fabricate against the two, what with thousands of people in the Temple courts glorifying God over what had been done.

22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old [and everyone in town had seen him crippled and begging in the same spot for decades].

23 Once they were released, Peter and John went back to the community, and reported what the chief priests and elders had told them.

24 When the other followers of Jesus heard that, they lifted their voices to God in unison, and said: Lord, you are God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them.

25 By the mouth of your servant David you said: **Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?**

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 Truly Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, banded together against Your holy child Jesus, whom You anointed,

28 To fulfill what was in control of Your hand, and in Your divine plan from the beginning.

29 Now, Lord, look down and see their threats, and grant to Your servants the boldness to speak Your Message,

30 By stretching forth Your hand to heal, and allowing signs and wonders to be done in the name of Your holy child Jesus!

31 After they prayed this, the place they were assembled at was shaken, and they were [again] filled with the Holy Spirit, and proclaimed the Message of God, point by point, with utter conviction, unmoved by any opposition.

32 And the multitude of believers were of one heart and soul, and none of them claimed their possessions as their own, but they shared what they had with all fellow believers who were in need.

33 And with great miracle-working power, the apostles testified to the reality of Jesus' resurrection, and great grace from God was on all the community.

34 Neither was there any within the community who lacked anything, for as many who were wealthy, and had land or houses, sold them as need arose, and brought the money,

35 Giving it to the apostles to distribute as needed; and they, in turn, gave to every man as he had need.

36 Now a man named Joses, who was nicknamed Barnabas--meaning Son of Consolation--by the apostles, a Levite from Cypress,

37 Sold some land he had there and brought the money,

presenting it to the apostles to use as they thought best.

1. Recall that the Sadducees absolutely reject the doctrines of miracles and a Resurrection.
2. Here is another example of the Sadducees either using their own Sanhedrin, or else forming one on the spot to deal with the problem of Christianity. It is not until Chapter 5, when Gamaliel is mentioned, that we first see the true Sanhedrin in operation, it being called a “**Senate**.”
3. An idiom meaning to give the apostles the authority to disburse the funds as they saw fit.
4. This is an extremely important verse. The Torah forbade Levites from owning land (Num. 18:20, Deut. 15:27), yet we see that Barnabas, a Levite, owned land in Cypress. This was permissible because, as determined by the sages, parts of the Torah applied only to the land of Israel itself. Thus, Levites who lived outside of Israel were exempt from observing laws like this.

ACTS CHAPTER 5

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,
 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.
 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?
 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?¹ why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.
 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.
 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.
 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.
 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.
 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.
 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.²
 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.
 12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.
 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.
 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)
 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.
 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.
 17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,
 18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them

ACTS CHAPTER 5

1 But there was a man named Ananias who, with Sapphira his wife, sold some land.
 2 He and his wife held back part of the proceeds, while still claiming they had donated the entire amount to the apostles to use as they thought best.
 3 But Peter said: Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to cause you to lie to the Holy Spirit, and keep back part of the money you sold the land for?
 4 This was your property, and after selling it wasn't the money yours to do with as you wished? Why have you plotted like this in your heart? It is not men you have lied to, but God!
 5 At hearing these words, Ananias fell down dead--and a great fear fell upon those who heard of this.
 6 Some young men in the community then rose up, wrapped him in a shroud, carried him out of the city, and buried him.
 7 Three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.
 8 Peter asked her: Did you sell some land for such-and-such a price? And she said: Yes--for that price.
 9 Then Peter told her: How is it that you both conspired to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well!
 10 Immediately Sapphira fell down dead at Peter's feet, and the young men returning from Ananias' burial came in and found her lying there. Then they carried *her* out to bury next to her husband.
 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon as many as heard of these incidents.
 12 And the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people; and the Messianic community, with one heart, gathered regularly in Solomon's Porch.
 13 Others were afraid to join them publicly, but everyone esteemed them.
 14 And many more believers were added to the ranks of the Lord, both men and women.
 15 So many people believed that they brought the sick out into the streets, laying them on sleeping mats and couches, that even Peter's shadow would fall upon some of them [and heal them].
 16 People also came in from the cities around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and the demon-possessed, and every person was healed.
 17 Finally it was too much for the High Priest, and he rose up with his fellow Sadducees in rage,
 18 And ordered the apostles arrested and jailed.
 19 But that night an angel of the Lord opened the doors and brought them out, saying:

in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,
20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate³ of the children of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one, and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered, and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.⁴

33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel⁵, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theudas⁶, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest

20 Go stand in the Temple, and spread the testimony of this life to the people!

21 When they heard that, they returned to the Temple early in the morning and continued to teach. Meanwhile, Caiaphas and his cronies came together and convened both their city Sanhedrin, along with the Great Sanhedrin of Israel, to come up with a joint solution to the problem of the disciples. Then they ordered them all brought forth from the prison [for interrogation].

22 But when the officers came to the jail and found the apostles gone, they returned, saying:

23 The jail was locked tight and the guards were standing outside the doors—but when we unlocked them, the prisoners were gone!

24 Now when the High Priest, the Levite over the Temple guards, and the chief priests were told this, they wondered what new problems would now arise.

25 Then someone came in, and told them: The men you jailed are out in the Temple courts, teaching their doctrines to the masses!

26 The Levite in command of the guards then went out with his officers and escorted them peacefully to the assembly, because they feared the crowds might stone them [if they abused the pair in public].

27 So when they had brought them before the assembly, the High Priest spoke,

28 Saying: Didn't we give you a direct command not to teach as representatives of Jesus?! Instead, you've filled Jerusalem with your doctrines, and on top of that, you're blaming us for Jesus' death [when it was the *Romans* who crucified him]!

29 Then Peter and the other apostles replied: We must obey *God*, rather than man.

30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus--whom *you* slew and crucified on a "tree"--from the dead!

31 God exalted Jesus with His right hand to be a Prince and Savior, to give Israel repentance and forgiveness of its sins!

32 And we are bearing witness of these things--as is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those obeying *Him* as their ruler [rather than you hypocrites]!

33 When they heard this, Caiaphas' faction was enraged, and began clamoring for their execution.

34 Then the President of the Great Sanhedrin, Hillel's grandson Gamaliel--a Pharisee expert in the Torah who was respected by everyone--stood up in the assembly and called for the apostles to be escorted from the chamber.

35 After they were gone, he spoke: You men of Israel, be careful what you do regarding these men.

36 Remember that in days past, Theudas rose up as a self-appointed revolutionary, gathering a band of four hundred followers, all of whom were eventually slain or put to flight and brought to nothing.

37 After him, Judas the Galilean arose in the days of Augustus' taxation and drew many of the people to him in rebellion. He died, in turn, and *his* followers scattered to the four winds.

38 So this is my advice: Stop harassing these men, and leave them alone. If this plan and what they do is of men, it will bear no fruit and die of its own accord.

39 But if it *is* of God you cannot stop it, and you will find yourselves actually fighting *against* God! [And you know there is no hope for you in that event.]

happily ye be found even to fight against God.
 40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.
 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.
 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

40 So the two Sanhedrins agreed with his suggestion, and after they summoned back the apostles and gave them a beating for good measure, they told them not to speak as Jesus' representatives. Then they released them.
 41 But the apostles instead left the meeting rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer as the ambassadors of Christ,
 42 And they did not cease to teach and preach Jesus Christ daily in the Temple and in every house they visited.

1. This is an important verse to contradict the legalistic teachings of some ministers and denominations. Tithing, though established in principle in the Scripture, and though a vehicle through which God blesses both giver and receiver, is not a requirement, nor is there a call to Christians to sell all they own in order to serve Christ.
2. One reason such a harsh judgment falls on this pair is that those who sold their goods off to give them to the community were thereafter put on the dole of the church, which saw to their needs. Ananias and Sapphira were thus committing an act of fraud against the church, intending to accept the charity of the church in meeting their everyday needs while keeping a reserve of cash hidden.
3. Only now is the true Sanhedrin, chaired by Gamaliel, called to assess the question of Christianity.
4. This verse is typically viewed as saying, "God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him." The problem with this notion is that it takes what Peter affirms in Acts 8 to Simon is a gift of God, and suggests it instead can somehow be earned through mere obedience. It also contradicts Paul's words to the Galatians that the Holy Spirit manifests because of faith alone, apart from their obeying commandments. So to determine what Peter is really saying here, we must first note that verses 28 and 29 seem to set the stage for what is said in verse 31. Next, we see that Peter is not speaking in a present or future tense (i.e., not "God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey him"); he is actually speaking in the *past* tense ("And we are witnesses of these [things] and the Holy Spirit which God gave to the ones obeying Him," in Greek). If we then note that the word translated as "obey" (*peitharcheo*) is only used four times in the New Testament, and means to acknowledge and obey someone as a ruler, we can see that Peter is actually responding to the elders' attack in verse 28 condemning the apostles for not obeying their command to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. Peter thus is not making some theological point that the Holy Spirit is earned and activated through obedience, but he is saying that those who have rejected the commands of the elders to disavow Christ, in favor of following God rather than man, are the ones whom God is doing miracles of the Spirit through to testify who and what Christ is. This attack on their authority thus propels the Sadducees into a fury in the next verse, causing them to want to kill the two apostles.
5. Gamaliel, whose name means "God is my reward" is one of the most important figures in Jewish history. He was the first Jewish sage to be given the exalted title of *rabban*, meaning "our master." Gamaliel, grandson of Hillel, is in many ways the chief cornerstone of rabbinic Judaism. Paul was supposedly a student of his, and mention of Paul is thought by some to be seen in Shabbat 30b of the Talmud, which mentions a student of Gamaliel who "displayed impudence in matters of learning."

Some sayings of Gamaliel

Make to thyself a teacher; and remove thyself from what is doubtful; and do not often tithe by mental valuation.

—R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, vol. 2.

A Gentile once brought fish to Rabban Gamaliel. He said, "They are permitted, but I have no wish to accept them from him."

—Betza 3.2, Danby, Mishna. Apparently, even Gamaliel—although he denied Shammai's edicts against Gentiles were binding—had his own prejudice against interacting with Gentiles, to the point of refusing food from them!

6. Often cited by skeptics as an error, for Josephus mentions a "Theudas" arising a decade later than this event. Actually, Theudas is usable as a nickname for a variety of Greek names, such as Theodosius, and Gamaliel is probably speaking of someone other than the man Josephus refers to.

ACTS CHAPTER 6

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.¹
 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.²
 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost³ and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.
 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.
 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:
 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they

ACTS CHAPTER 6

1 In time, as the community swelled with disciples, complaints arose on the part of Greek-speaking proselytes to the faith against the Jewish believers, because their widows were being short-changed in the daily dole.
 2 Then the twelve called the whole multitude of disciples together, and told them: It's not good that we must set aside preaching the Message of God to go hand food out at tables.
 3 Therefore, brothers, select seven men from among you of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint over this ministry.
 4 And we will devote ourselves full time to prayer and ministry of the Message.
 5 The idea pleased everyone, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, along with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte from Antioch.

had prayed, they laid their hands on them.⁴
 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests⁵ were obedient to the faith.
 8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.
 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians,⁶ and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.
 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.
 11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.
 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,
 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:
 14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.⁷
 15 And all that sat in the council⁸, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

6 These were brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid hands on them [and ordained them for this ministry].
 7 So the Message of God went forth, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem greatly increased. Even many of the priests came to obey the faith.
 8 And Stephen, full of the divine power of God's grace, performed great wonders and miracles among the people.
 9 Then some [proselytes to Judaism] from the synagogue of the Libertines [—the Freed Slaves—] who were made up of Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Cilicians, and some from Turkey, argued with Stephen.
 10 But they were unable to counter the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke,
 11 So they came up with some false witnesses who made a charge against him, saying: We heard this man speak blasphemously against Moses and God!
 12 And they stirred up the people, the city leaders, and the Torah teachers, who rose up and dragged Stephen off to the Sanhedrin.
 13 False witnesses were brought in, saying: This man continually blasphemes this Holy Place and the Torah!
 14 We've heard him claim that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple, and will change the traditions we inherited from Moses!
 15 And all that sat in the Sanhedrin, who gazed upon him, saw his face shining as if it were the face of an angel.

1. Here again, the bigotry of the Jews against Gentiles is shown, for even though this was the Spirit-empowered church of Acts, fleshly prejudice resulted in Gentile converts being treated as second-class in comparison to Jews.
2. 'Serving tables' isn't meant in the sense of serving in the way a waitress does, but means to sit at a table and receive or distribute funds in the way Levi, for instance, sat at the receipt of custom when Christ called him.
3. "Full of the Holy Ghost" is not a reference to having Charismatic gifts, but refers to the anointing and wisdom of the Spirit as the second part of the verse illustrates. "Holy Spirit," remember, was a synonym in Judaism for the wisdom or power of God before it was understood as the third Person of the Trinity.
4. An example of ordination and empowerment. It should be noted that Hebrews 6 lists the *laying on of hands* as one of the six essentials of Christianity.
5. This may be the only record in the New Testament of Sadducees converting, though not all Sadducees were of the same social class, nor were all priests Sadducees.
6. These appear to be Hellenistic groups.
7. Although distorted by false witnesses, this verse is crucial in deriving some of the teachings of the early church that are contradicted by some of my Messianic brethren today who believe God requires all believers to observe Mosaic Law. From their words, we can see that Stephen apparently taught that the Temple, heart and soul of Jewish worship, was going to pass into history and be destroyed, and with it Mosaic Law would somehow be overturned and 'changed.' This doesn't mean that Stephen and the early believers threw the Torah into the trash and ceased to keep the customs and commandments they had grown up in, but certainly the place of the Torah in the believer's life, along with its function and purpose, were forever altered because Christ had fulfilled it in its entirety, and placed the spirit of Torah into the hearts of those who were His. Stephen's ultimate point was probably the very message that Paul came to embrace: That God would not accept someone on the basis of their obedience and lifestyle (in fact, the time was coming when most of the commandments couldn't even be followed with the fall of the Temple), but God would require all to come to Him through faith in Messiah, the true Temple of mediation between Man and God.
8. Whether this "council" is the Great Sanhedrin or the Sadducee city council is unclear. The fact that Paul is present suggests it was former, but one cannot say with certainty.

ACTS CHAPTER 7

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?
 2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,
 3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.¹
 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his

ACTS CHAPTER 7

1 Then the High Priest asked: Are these accusations true?
 2 To this, Stephen replied: Men, brothers, and chief elders of Israel, listen! The God of glory revealed Himself to our ancestor Abraham when he was a dweller in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,
 3 And He told him, *Leave this country and your relatives, and go to a land that I will show you.*
 4 So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. Then, after his father had died, God led him to this land, where you all live now.

father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.
 5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.
 6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.
 7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.
 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.
 9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,
 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.
 11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.
 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.
 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.
 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.
 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,
 16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.
 17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,
 18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.
 19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.
 20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:
 21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.
 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.
 23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.
 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:
 25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.²
 26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to

5 But He did not give it to him at that time as an inheritance, nor did Abraham even set foot on the land where Jerusalem now is, but God promised that He would give it to him, and his descendants after him, as their own—even though Abraham as yet had no son.
 6 God also prophesied to him that his descendants would travel to a strange land, and the people there would bring them into bondage and mistreat them for four hundred years.
 7 **“And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge,”** God said, **“and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.”**
 8 And God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. So Abraham had Isaac, and circumcised him on his eighth day of birth. Then Isaac had Jacob [and did likewise], and Jacob had the twelve Patriarchs [continuing the custom].
 9 But the Patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph as a slave to Egypt. But God was with him,
 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, giving him favor and wisdom in the eyes of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt; and Pharaoh made him the overseer over Egypt and all his household.
 11 In time, a bad drought and famine hit both Egypt and Canaan, bringing great trouble, and our ancestors could find nothing to eat.
 12 But when Jacob heard that wheat was to be had in Egypt, he sent our Patriarchal ancestors there first.
 13 The second time they went there, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, and introduced them to Pharaoh.
 14 Then Joseph sent them back with a message to his father Jacob to return with all his family, totaling seventy-five people.
 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt and died, as did the Patriarchs.
 16 All of them were carried into Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham bought from the sons of Hamor, the founder of Shechem.
 17 But when the time of the promised deliverance God swore about to Abraham drew near, the Hebrew population exploded in Egypt,
 18 Until another Pharaoh came to power who did not know about Joseph.
 19 This Pharaoh plotted against our people, and forced our ancestors to expose their male newborn children, intending to kill off our race.
 20 In this time Moses, an exceedingly handsome child, was born and then brought up for three months in his father's house.
 21 Then, when they finally cast *him* out and exposed him to the elements, Pharaoh's daughter adopted and raised him as her own son.
 22 This resulted in Moses learning all the wisdom Egypt had to offer, and he became mighty in word and deed.
 23 Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart that he should visit his brothers, the children of Israel.
 24 And seeing one of them being mistreated, he defended the man being abused, and slew the Egyptian harming him.
 25 He thought that this would show his brother Jews how God was going to use him to deliver them from bondage, but they did not understand.
 26 For the next day, when he came upon two of them fighting, he broke them up, hoping to make peace between

another?

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel³ which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively⁴ oracles to give unto us:

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.⁵

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in

them, saying, "Men, you are brothers! Why fight like this?!"

27 But the instigator, who started this by wronging his neighbor, pushed him back, saying, "Who made *you* a ruler and judge over us?!"

28 "Will you kill me, as you did the Egyptian yesterday?!"

29 Hearing this, Moses fled Egypt, and was a sojourner in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.

30 And after forty years there [--when he had completely abandoned any thought of being a deliverer to his people--] an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush.

31 When Moses beheld the sight, he was amazed. Then, as he came up to investigate, the voice of the Lord came to him,

32 Saying, "I am the God of your ancestors--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob!" Then Moses shook in fear, and dared not look.

33 The Lord told him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for this is holy ground you stand upon.

34 "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cries. I have come down to deliver them. Get up--I will now send *you* into Egypt!"

35 The same Moses whom they had refused, saying, "Who made *you* a ruler and a judge?" was the same one God sent to be a ruler and deliverer through the power of the angel who had appeared to him in the bush.

36 So Moses brought them out after showing them signs and wonders in Egypt, the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

37 This is the same Moses who said to the children of Israel, **A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.**

38 It was also Moses who was with the congregation in the wilderness, and was the go-between with the angel that spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and who--with our ancestors--received living words of wisdom for us.

39 Our ancestors would not obey him, but rejected him as their hearts turned back to Egypt [and its ways].

40 For they said to Aaron: "Make us idols of some gods to lead us, for we do not know what has happened to this man Moses, who led us out of Egypt!"

41 Then they made a calf at that time [to honor the goddess Hathor/Isis], and performed a sacrifice, being proud of what they had created with their own hands.

42 So God stepped back and allowed them to worship the evil beings of the heavens [represented by heavenly bodies], as was acknowledged in the Scriptures: **O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?**

43 **Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.**

44 These same ancestors of ours had the *Tabernacle of Witness* with them in the wilderness, the one God revealed to Moses in outlining its design and construction.

45 That same tabernacle our ancestors, in turn, took with them when Joshua led them into the Promised Land as God drove out before them the Gentiles who had lived

with Jesus⁶ into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47 But Solomon built him an house.

48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels⁷, and have not kept it.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.⁸

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul⁹.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.¹⁰

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.¹¹ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

there previously; and it remained there until the days of David.

46 Now David found favor with God, and he asked permission to build a temple to the God of Jacob.

47 But it was Solomon who actually built Him a house.

48 In any event, the Most High does not live in temples made with human hands, as the prophet Isaiah said:

45 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

51 [My point in all this, is that the Jewish people have a bad habit of initially rejecting the man God wants to use to deliver them. That, or they kill the prophets God sends to call them to repentance--and how you are proving that!]

You stubborn people, uncircumcised in heart and hearing--you always resist the Holy Spirit [and His call to repentance]! As your ancestors did--so you do!

52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? Your ancestors, in their days, slew the ones who warned *them*, and when the Just One came, you became *his* betrayers and murderers!

53 Yes, you--who received the Torah that was ordained and handed over to you by angels, but still have not kept it!

54 Now when they heard these denunciations, they exploded with rage.

55 But Stephen, being filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed up into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand.

56 He announced: Look! I see a vision of the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!

57 Then the entire assembly howled with anger and covered their ears [at this blasphemy] as they all charged at him.

58 They dragged him outside of Jerusalem to stone him, and the witnesses [--who had to throw the first stones--] left their cloaks with a young man named Saul to stand watch over.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!

60 Then he knelt down, and cried loudly: Lord, don't hold this sin against them! And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1. It should be noted, as verse 4 shows, that Abraham disobeyed this command and stayed with his father until the man died. Only then did he follow the course God showed, and again he only partially obeyed since he took Lot with him.

2. Jews always had a skepticism and rejection of a Deliverer having to come twice to actually free them. Yet here we see this also happened with Moses, the first Deliverer and precursor to Christ--and for the same reason: The people "**did not understand**" and so rejected the Deliverer until God sent him a second time many years later.

3. Though usually presumed to be a manifestation of Jesus, the "**angel**" had to *be* an angel, and *not* Jesus! We know this because the Book of Hebrews makes the distinction between the Law given by angels, and the New covenant proclaimed by the Son of God Himself.

4. "**Lively**" is better understood as: "**Living**."

5. The Jews believed that Moses was given a vision of a heavenly Temple from which he designed the earthly Tabernacle.

6. The "**Jesus**" mentioned here is actually Joshua. Remember that *Jesus* is the Greek form of the name *Joshua*. Stephen's point is that just as the Hebrews could not be led into the Promised Land by Moses, but by Joshua, so God was showing that one will not enter heaven through obeying the commandments given through Moses, but only through following Jesus.

7. Jewish tradition held that angelic messengers sent from God gave the Torah. Angels were also believed to have watched over the camp of Israel, and to disburse judgment on those who had committed impropriety, which Paul alludes to in 1 Cor. 11:10.

8. A problematic verse for Trinitarians for no mention is made of the Holy Spirit. One can speculate, however, that the Holy Spirit is not seen in this Theophany because He is presented in the Scripture as working directly on the earth as the agent of God's drawing mankind to salvation (John 16:7-15).

9. Otherwise known to us as Paul. Thievery was commonplace in Jerusalem, and it would have been appropriate for a guard to be set over the people's clothing during a public stoning.

10. Yet another verse contradicting the doctrine of "Soul sleep."

11. This is what Christian forgiveness is: Releasing the offender from the debt he owes, and asking God to do likewise (Luke 23:34). The wronged person's "feelings" are irrelevant, because forgiveness is based on an act of will, not a feeling.

ACTS CHAPTER 8

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death¹. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem²; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.
2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.
3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.³
4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.
5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.
6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.
7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.
8 And there was great joy in that city.
9 But there was a certain man, called Simon⁴, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:
10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.
11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.
12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women⁵.
13 Then Simon himself believed⁶ also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.
14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:
15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:
16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)
17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.
18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,
19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.
20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.
21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.
22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be

ACTS CHAPTER 8

1 And this man Saul voted to affirm Stephen's execution. At that same time, a great persecution arose in Jerusalem against the church, and the believers [--especially the Hellenistic ones--] were scattered abroad throughout Judaea and Samaria. The apostles, however, remained in Jerusalem.
2 Meanwhile, some devout men carried Stephen out to be buried, and wept greatly over his passing.
3 As for the man Saul, he became a terror to the church, going from house to house, kicking in doors and hauling men and women off to the dungeons.
4 But those who were scattered abroad proclaimed the Message of the Gospel wherever they went.
5 Then Philip went down to a chief city of Samaria, and preached the Messiah to the population.
6 And all the people, with one heart, accepted what Philip told them when they saw and heard about the miracles he performed.
7 For demon spirits came out shouting from those who were possessed by them, and many who were suffering debilitating diseases, and those who were lame, were healed.
8 And there was great joy in that city.
9 But there was a man there named Simon who had previously been a practitioner of the Black Arts, using sorcery to bewitch the people of Samaria and make a big name for himself.
10 Everyone, from the least to the greatest in that city, listened to his opinions, for they said: This man is the great Power, representing God Himself!
11 They had respected him for a long time because he had ensnared them with his sorceries.
12 But when they believed the message Philip brought about the Messianic Kingdom and the person and position of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.
13 Then Simon believed as well, and after being baptized joined himself to Philip, and was amazed at the miracles and signs he saw.
14 Now when word reached the apostles back in Jerusalem that Samaria had received the Message of God, they sent Peter and John,
15 Who went down and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit.
16 You see, He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they were only baptized [in water] in the name of the Lord Jesus.
17 So they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
18 Now when Simon observed that the Holy Spirit had been imparted through the apostles laying hands on the people, he offered them money,
19 Saying: Give me also the authority to impart the Holy Spirit on whomever I lay hands upon!
20 But Peter responded: You and your silver can perish together for the gall to think that the gift of God could be purchased with mere money!
21 You have no place or part in this sort of ministry,

forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me⁷, that none of these things which ye have spoke come upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch⁸ of great authority under Candace⁹ queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered, and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.¹⁰

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus¹¹: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

because your heart is not right in God's sight!

22 Repent of your wickedness, and beg God to forgive the evil motivations of your heart if He will!

23 For I perceive that you have fallen prey to a deadly poison, and are bound by iniquity!

24 Then Simon answered: You two--pray to the Lord that none of these things you've spoken will come upon me!

25 So Peter and John, after testifying and preaching the Message of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in many Samaritan villages as they went.

26 As for Philip, the angel of the Lord spoke to him, and said: Get up, and travel south to the desert trail that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.

27 Philip then arose and went, and he chanced to come upon a high court official who oversaw the treasury of the Kandake of Ethiopia. He had come to Jerusalem to worship [at a Festival],

28 And was now returning in a chariot, sitting and reading a scroll of Isaiah the prophet as he went.

29 Then the Spirit told Philip: Go up, and walk with this chariot.

30 So Philip ran up to the chariot, listening as the man read from Isaiah. He asked the man: Do you understand what you're reading?

31 The official replied: How can I, unless someone explains it to me? Then he asked Philip to sit with him in the chariot.

32 The verses of Scripture the eunuch read were these [from Isaiah 53]: **He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:**

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 The official then asked Philip: Tell me--is the prophet speaking about himself, or some other man?

35 Then Philip spoke, and starting with those Scriptures, preached Jesus to him.

36 As they traveled on, they came upon a body of water, and the official said: Look--here is water. What prevents me from being baptized right now?

37 [Philip responded, If you believe with all your heart, then you may. To this, the official replied: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!]

38 So he halted the chariot, and both men went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

39 When they emerged from the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away so the official saw him no more, and he went on his way home, rejoicing.

40 Philip, meanwhile, found himself in Ashdod, and passing through it and the region, he preached to everyone until he came to the great port of Caesarea.

1. The language here and in chapter 22:20, suggests that Paul may have literally voted to condemn Stephen, which means that he must have been a member of the Great Sanhedrin.

2. This persecution was not wholly an attack on Christianity; it seems to have been a by-product of an overall revolt, for a time, against Hellenism occurring several years after the Crucifixion. It's during this period that the ruling Shammaites may have expelled all non-Hebrew Jews and Proselytes from Jerusalem. The Hebrew apostles, it will be noted, remain in the city while the non-Hebrews are forced to leave.

3. Further evidence Paul was not merely a scholar, but that he held some degree of political power.

4. There is in Samaria an ancient heretical sect of Christians called *Dositheans*, after their founder Dositheus, an early disciple of John the Baptist who led an Essene-type group of 30 disciples. Dositheus may have later been one of the original 70 disciples of Christ. Simon Magus is thought by some to have been a disciple of his, and Dositheus has the distinction of being dubbed the first

Christian heretic, although the apocryphal information we have about him comes from later centuries.

Hippolytus, writing in the 3rd century recorded some of his Gnostic-like statements: *Of the universal Eons, there are two growths, without beginning or end, springing from one Root, which is the Power, Silence, invisible, inapprehensible. Of these, one appears from above, which is the Great Power, the Universal Mind, ordering all things, male; and the other from below, The Great Thought, female, producing all things.* (George Robert Stow Mead--*Fragments of a Faith Forgotten.*)

5. The first time women are specifically mentioned as being baptized.

6. Although frequently claimed by some--particularly those advancing "Once saved, always saved" doctrine--that Simon wasn't truly a believer, the word here is the same used throughout the New Testament for those who truly believe and accept Christ. There is thus no textual justification for a claim that Simon had a "said faith, rather than a real faith."

7. Simon's request that the apostles pray for him, though frequently criticized, is perfectly consistent with Jewish practices going back to Moses, who was the intercessor for the Israelites. Note that Peter does not command Simon to confess his sin to *him* and receive absolution (as Catholicism and Orthodox faiths would teach), but instead tells him to beg God *directly* for forgiveness.

8. "**Eunuch**" should be understood as a '*high court official*,' not that the man was literally a eunuch, for true eunuchs were forbidden from entering the Temple (Deut. 23:1).

9. A transliteration of *Kandake*, a title of Ethiopian (Cushite) royalty, not a proper name as *Candace* is today.

10. Often used as Scriptural verification against the doctrine of infant baptism, for clearly Philip understands that baptism is for those who truly believe in Christ. However, this verse is probably a later addition to the text.

11. Otherwise known as Ashdod, a major (Philistine) city in the Gaza strip south of Joppa. It was listed in Joshua as part of the heritage of Judah, but never actually taken.

ACTS CHAPTER 9

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,¹

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way², whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.³

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

ACTS CHAPTER 9

1 Now Saul--still fanatically vowing to root out and slay the disciples of the Lord--went to Caiaphas, the High Priest,

2 And asked him for documents appointing him as an Inquisitor to the Damascus synagogues, and giving him the authority to bring back in chains any men or women who were followers of "the Way."

3 So he departed with these, but as he was approaching Damascus, suddenly a radiance from heaven shined round about him.

4 And he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him: Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?

5 He answered it: Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said back to him: I am Jesus, the one you're persecuting. [You are wasting your time, *kicking against the pricks!*]

6 [Then Saul, trembling in fear and astonishment, said: Lord, what do you want me to do? So the Lord said back to him:] Get up, and go into the city, and you'll be told what to do.

7 Meanwhile, the men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sounds of a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind, and his traveling companions led him by the hand until they entered Damascus.

9 For three days there he was blind, and took neither food nor drink.

10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision: Ananias! So he answered: Behold, I am here, Lord!

11 And the Lord said to him: Get up, go to Straight street, and ask at the house of Judah for a man called Saul, from the city of Tarsus, who is praying even now,

12 And has seen a vision of a man named Ananias coming and putting his hand upon him to restore his sight.

13 Then Ananias replied: Lord--I have heard from many about this man, and all the evil he has done to your righteous ones in Jerusalem;

14 And here he has the authority from the chief priests to apprehend all who call upon you as Lord here in Damascus.

15 But the Lord answered him: Go! For he is a chosen vessel of mine, to proclaim who and what I am to the Gentiles, to kings, and to the children of Israel!

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive the sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.⁴

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?⁵

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him.⁶

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians⁷: but they went about to slay him.

30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.⁸

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.⁹

33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas:

16 For I will show him how greatly he will have to suffer for the sake of who and what I am.

17 So Ananias went as he was told, and came into the house of Judah; and laying hands on Saul, he said: Brother Saul, the Lord—even Jesus—who appeared to you as you traveled down the road to here, has sent me so your sight may be restored, and that you might be filled with the Holy Spirit.

18 And immediately it was as if scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. Then he arose, and was baptized.

19 After eating some meat, his strength returned.

Thereafter, Saul remained for a while with some disciples from the Messianic community in Damascus.

20 Afterward, he began to preach in the synagogues that: "Jesus is the Messiah and king of Israel!"

21 But all who heard him were shocked, saying: Wasn't this the man who destroyed those who called Jesus Lord in Jerusalem, and who came here to bring his followers back to Jerusalem in chains to the chief priests?

22 But Saul argued increasingly more powerfully on this point, and confounded the unbelieving Jews at Damascus, proving [Scripturally] that Jesus is the Messiah.

23 After a long time of this, some of the unbelieving Jews decided they'd had enough of him, so they schemed to kill him.

24 But word got back to Saul of their planned assassination, and their teams of assassins watching the city gates, day and night, in hope of killing him.

25 So the disciples smuggled him out of the city by night, lowering him over the wall on a [braided rope].

26 When Saul returned to Jerusalem, he tried to join the community there, but they were all afraid of him, and refused to believe that he was a true disciple of Christ.

27 But Barnabas took a chance on him, and brought him to the apostles. He explained that Paul had seen the Lord as he went, and that Jesus had spoken to him. He also testified how Paul had boldly preached as an ambassador of Jesus in Damascus.

28 [So the apostles accepted him,] and he accompanied them in and out of Jerusalem.

29 He spoke boldly as an ambassador of Jesus, focusing on heated debates with the Hellenistic Jews, but *they* sought to kill him too.

30 When the brothers in Jerusalem found out about this, they brought him down to Caesarea, and then sent him home to Tarsus.

31 Then [with Saul gone], the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace again, and were strengthened, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. And their ranks swelled with new members.

32 Now it came to pass, as Peter was making a sojourn to visit the various groups of believers, he came to the community of the righteous who dwelt in Lydda.

33 There, he found a certain paralytic man named Aeneas, who had lain in bed for eight years.

34 And Peter told him: Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole—get up and make your bed! At Peter's word, Aeneas got up immediately.

35 And all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and embraced Jesus as Lord [as a result of this miracle].

36 Now at Joppa there was a well-known woman disciple

this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.
 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed¹⁰, they laid her in an upper chamber.
 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.
 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.
 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.
 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.
 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.
 43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

named Tabitha--Dorcas in Greek--who was renowned for her good deeds and the aid she gave the needy.
 37 While Peter was in the area, she fell sick and died, and after they [gave her a ritual baptism for the dead], they laid her body out in an upper room.
 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, and since the believers heard Peter was there, they sent two men to him, asking him to immediately come to them.
 39 Then Peter arose, and followed them back to Joppa. When they arrived, Peter was escorted to the upper chamber where the body was. In it, all the local widows were mourning, and they showed Peter the tunics and clothing Dorcas had made for them while she was alive.
 40 But Peter ordered them out of the room, then kneeled down and prayed. Then, turning to the body, he said: Tabitha, arise! And she opened her eyes, and when her gaze fell upon Peter, she sat up.
 41 Then he took her by the hand and helped her up; and when he had called the righteous and the widows, presented her alive to them.
 42 And word of this spread through all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.
 43 Peter thereafter stayed for quite some time in Joppa, lodging with a man named Simon who was a tanner of skins.

1. That Paul goes to Caiaphas rather than to Gamaliel, who heads the Sanhedrin, is noteworthy. The influence of the High Priest was questionable outside of Jerusalem, with the true control over the synagogues resting with the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin. Based on the tolerance that Gamaliel espouses toward the Christians in chapter 5, there may have been a disagreement between Paul and Gamaliel on how to deal with the movement, and Paul may have been forced to cooperate with the Sadducees to get his commission to oppress the Christians.
2. "The Way" (*hodos*) was the original name by which the Christians called themselves.
3. Though inserted here by scribes trying to harmonize the last part of the verse with Acts 26:14, it is amazing how God was able to use Paul's vast knowledge of contemporary culture to get His message across to him in one sentence. The quote is from *The Bacchae*, written by Euripedes centuries earlier, which tells the tale of a man who knows it's pointless to fight against Zeus (God). Lamsa, however, claims this is also an Aramaic idiom meaning something along the lines of, "You might hurt another man, but you're really hurting yourself!"
4. This is a good proof text for the notion that the fullness of the Holy Spirit is not received upon conversion (Paul has already become a believer), but that a "second blessing" of the Holy Spirit is available to Christians.
5. It is likely that word of Paul's sudden "conversion" reached Jerusalem and bought him time to begin preaching the Gospel, for the authorities there may have surmised it was a bluff on his part to worm himself into the good graces of the Christian community.
6. By this time, it was apparent to all that Paul's conversion was real, and that he was an unparalleled threat.
7. "Grecians" means Hellenistic Jews of Hebrew descent (the Gentile proselytes, remember, had been expelled from Jerusalem earlier).
8. It is fascinating to note that Paul was far from being Spirit-led at this point, for after he is forced from the area because of his admirable--but carnal--zeal, the church goes through a time of peace and edification. The fact that Judea, Galilee, and Samaria are mentioned suggests Paul had been traveling back and forth in these regions preaching, and that he was not limiting his mission to Jerusalem.
9. Twenty miles NW of Jerusalem, near the Mediterranean.
10. This is what Paul refers to when he talks about those that are "baptized for the dead" (1 Cor. 15:29). This was a Jewish ritual immersion of the body prior to burial, symbolizing the Resurrection.

ACTS CHAPTER 10

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,
 2 A devout man, and one that feared God¹ with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.
 3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.
 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.
 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon,

ACTS CHAPTER 10

1 Now there was a certain chief centurion [--a *Principale*--] in Caesarea named Cornelius, an officer in the "Italian Band."
 2 A devout man, Cornelius and his household were "God-fearers" [--semi-proselytes to full Judaism]. He was also generous, giving alms to the people, and always offering prayers to God.
 3 Around three PM one day [as he prayed], he had a vision of an angel of God coming into the house and calling out: Cornelius!
 4 When Cornelius looked at him, he was terrified, and said: What is it, Sir? The angel replied: Your prayers and alms have come up to God in testimony of you.

whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.²

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common

5 So now, send messengers to Joppa, and summon Shimon, surnamed Peter,

6 Who is staying with one named Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seashore. He will tell you what you should do.

7 After the angel who had spoken departed, Cornelius summoned two household servants, along with a trusted legionnaire who was his personal attendant.

8 And after telling them what had happened, he sent them to Joppa.

9 The next day, as they were approaching the city, Peter went up to the roof of the house to pray at noontime.

10 He became very hungry, and asked for some lunch. But while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

11 He saw heaven revealed, and from it descended a great sheet let down together by the four corners like a sack [holding something inside]. It fell down to earth and unfolded,

12 Revealing its contents to be all sorts of [non-kosher] four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds.

13 And a voice spoke, saying: Rise, Peter! Kill, and eat!

14 Peter replied: No, Lord! I have never eaten impure or unclean meats!

15 But the voice said a second time: What God has cleansed, do not call "unclean"!

16 Three times the voice said this, and then the sheet was snatched back into heaven.

17 Now while Peter was totally confused about what the vision meant, the men sent from Cornelius had asked where to find Simon's house, and they now arrived at its gate.

18 They called out, asking whether a man called Shimon, surnamed Peter, was staying there.

19 And while Peter, back on the roof, was wondering about the vision, the Spirit said to him: Behold--three men are seeking you.

20 Get up, go down to them, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them here.

21 So Peter went down to the men who had been sent by Cornelius, and said to them: I am the man you're asking about. Why have you come?

22 And they said in response: Cornelius the centurion--a just man and "God-fearer"--who has a good reputation among all the Jews, was warned by God through a holy angel to send for you to come to his house so he can hear whatever you have to say to him.

23 So Peter called them in and let them stay the night. The next morning, Peter, along with a few of the brethren from Joppa, went with them.

24 It took them a day, and then they entered Caesarea, where Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relatives and good friends.

25 As Peter entered his yard, Cornelius came and fell at his feet, doing obeisance to him.

26 But Peter lifted him back to his feet, saying: Stand up! I myself am also just a man.

27 And as Peter continued talking with him, he entered Cornelius' home and saw the many people who were assembled there.

28 Peter spoke to them, and said: You know that it is a violation of our [oral] Torah for a man to keep company with, or even enter the house of a Gentile. But

or unclean.³

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid these to receive water baptism, seeing they have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?⁴

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

God has shown me that I should not call any man *impure* or *unclean*.

29 That is why I came to you without hesitation as soon as I was summoned. Now why have you sent for me?

30 Cornelius answered: Four days ago, I was fasting to this very hour, and at the ninth hour I was praying in my house when a man appeared before me dressed in shining robes.

31 He said: "Cornelius, your prayer is heard, and your alms have come up to God in testimony of you.

32 "Send messengers to Joppa, and summon Shimon, surnamed Peter. He is staying in the house of a man named Simon, a tanner living by the seaside. When he comes, he will tell you what you should do."

33 Thus, I immediately sent word to you, and you are kind to have come. So here we are, at God's disposal, to hear everything He commands you to tell us.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said: I see now it is indeed true that God prefers no man over another.

35 But among every ethnic group, He accepts one who honors Him, and lives uprightly.

36 The message that God sent to the children of Israel, declaring peace [with Him], through the preaching of Jesus Christ--the Lord of all--

37 Is a message I am sure you are aware of. It was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and originated in Galilee, after the baptism that John preached about.

38 That message was, of course, about how God anointed Jesus Christ of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power--who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses of all the things he did, both in the lands of the Judeans and in Jerusalem itself--up until they slew him, and hung him on a "tree."

40 But God raised him up on the third day, and showed him publicly once again alive,

41 Not to everyone, but to those chosen by God to be witnesses--even us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

42 And he ordered us to preach to the people and affirm that he is the one whom God ordained to judge the living and the dead.

43 To him, all the prophets affirm that through who and what he is, anyone who believes in him will receive the remission of their sins.

44 Now while Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all of those who heard the message.

45 And the Jewish believers who came with Peter were astonished to behold the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon Gentiles,

46 For they heard them speak with Tongues, and glorify God. Then Peter responded by saying:

47 Can any man forbid these to receive water baptism, seeing they have received the Holy Spirit just as us?

48 And Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they begged him to stay with them for a few days.

1. This means he was in the class of *God-fearers*, Gentiles who had accepted the God of Israel but stopped short at either becoming circumcised or following the full Torah. Cornelius, having his own household and appearing to have such significant authority, suggests he was a chief centurion, or *Principale*, who received double the usual wages for a Roman officer.

2. This verse is sometimes used to substantiate the notion that God has overturned the Jewish dietary laws for believers. That is a largely a misuse of the event and text, which was meant to break the ice in permitting Peter to interact with and accept Gentiles into

the faith. It's true that Christians are not mandated to observe kosher diets, but this verse is not a good basis for that conclusion.
 3. Nowhere in the Torah does it say that it is unlawful (against Torah) for a Jew to enter a Gentile's house. Peter is referring to the oral law of Shammai's 18 edicts, which mandated separation between Jew and Gentile. This verse is thus 100% substantiation that the apostles held that the oral law of the Pharisees was equally binding to that of the written Scriptures--which does not substantiate the notion, but rather contradicts it and shows how they would have to be broken of that belief!
 4. Absolute proof to contradict the legalistic teachings of groups claiming that forgiveness of sin is not accomplished until baptism. Here, we see Cornelius and his household accepted by God and filled with the Spirit prior to baptism, because they had heard and accepted the Gospel message, not because they had believed and were then baptized!

ACTS CHAPTER 11

1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.
 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision¹ contended with him,
 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.
 4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,
 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:
 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.
 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.
 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.
 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.
 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.
 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.
 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:
 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood, and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;
 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.
 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.
 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.
 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?
 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.
 19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.
 20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.
 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great

ACTS CHAPTER 11

1 Meanwhile, the apostles and brothers in the community back in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Message of God.
 2 But when Peter returned to Jerusalem, some Jewish believers confronted him,
 3 Saying: You went into the house of uncircumcised Gentiles, and ate with them?!
 4 But Peter related the story from the beginning, and told them:
 5 I was praying in the city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision. I beheld a sheet let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came near to me.
 6 When I looked at it, I saw [non-kosher] four-footed beasts of the earth, wild animals, reptiles, and birds of the air.
 7 And I heard a voice tell me, "Arise, Peter--kill, and eat!"
 8 But I said, "No, Lord--for nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth!"
 9 But the voice answered me from heaven again, and said: "What God has cleansed, call not *unclean*!"
 10 This happened three times, then the sheet and its contents were taken back to heaven.
 11 At the same time, three men sent from Caesarea arrived at the house I was staying at.
 12 The Spirit had me go with them, doubting nothing. Also, these six other members of the brethren went with me, and we *all* actually went into the man's house.
 13 And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood before him, and said, "Send men to Joppa, and call for Shimon, whose surname is Peter,
 14 "Who will tell you words whereby you and your household shall be saved."
 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them as He did upon us at the beginning.
 16 Then I remembered what the Lord had said: "John certainly baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the *Holy Spirit*."
 17 So then, since God saw fit to give them the same gift He gave to us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ--who was I to oppose what God was doing?
 18 When they heard these things, they relaxed and glorified God, saying: Then God has apparently granted repentance to eternal life to the Gentiles as well!
 19 Meanwhile, those who had been scattered abroad after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cypress, and Antioch, preaching the Message--but only to the Jews.
 20 But some of them from Cypress and Cyrene, when they arrived at Antioch, spoke to the Greeks as well, telling them about the Lord Jesus.

number believed, and turned unto the Lord.
 22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.
 23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.
 24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.
 25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:
 26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians² first in Antioch.
 27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.
 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth³ throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.
 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:
 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and many Greek Gentiles believed, and turned to the Lord.
 22 Word eventually reached Jerusalem about this, and the church there assigned Barnabas to go to Antioch.
 23 When he got there and saw how much grace of God was on display, he rejoiced and encouraged them to devote themselves, body and soul, to the Lord.
 24 This Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And because of him, many were added to the ranks of the Lord.
 25 Then Barnabas left for Tarsus to find Saul.
 26 When he did, he brought him to Antioch, and for a whole year they joined themselves to the church there, and taught many people. It was at this time in Antioch that the disciples first called themselves *Christians*.
 27 And in those days, prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch.
 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and proclaimed by the Spirit that there would be a great drought and famine throughout the land. This prophecy came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.
 29 Then the disciples, each as they were able, decided to send relief to the brothers who dwelt in Judea.
 30 They did this, entrusting the money to Barnabas and Saul, who delivered it to the elders.

1. These probably were authorities in the church who were tied to James (Gal. 2:12). This group of Shammaite believers would form the core of the *Judaizers*, who drove Paul mad as they followed after him, trying to force the Gentile Christians to adopt circumcision and Mosaic Law.
2. The word "**called**" (*chrematizo*) in the verse often refers to someone articulating on behalf of God, suggesting it may have been by specific divine will that the word originated!
3. "**Dearth**" means a drought, which then causes a famine.

ACTS CHAPTER 12

1 Now about that time Herod the king¹ stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.
 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.
 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)
 4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter² to bring him forth to the people.
 5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.
 6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.
 7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.
 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.
 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.
 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city;

ACTS CHAPTER 12

1 Now about that time, Herod Agrippa [--Antipas having been removed by Caesar, and banished--] took action to persecute certain [leaders] of the church.
 2 And he had James, the [older] brother of John, slain with the sword.
 3 When he saw this pleased the Judean leaders, he moved to take Peter as well during the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread.
 4 So Agrippa took Peter into custody, and jailed him, placing sixteen soldiers to keep watch over him until he could [slay him publicly after Passover].
 5 Peter thus was locked in prison, but the church prayed to God day and night for him.
 6 [Then the day approached when Herod would end Peter's life.] But that night, Peter had been sleeping between two guards, his arms chained securely, with other guards watching the locked gate of the prison.
 7 Then an angel of the Lord came to him, shining in a great radiance that lit up the prison, and he poked Peter in the side and pulled him to his feet, saying: Get up quickly! The chains also fell off Peter's hands.
 8 The angel spoke further, telling him: Get dressed, and put your sandals on! Peter did this, and the angel said: Pull your cloak around you, and follow me.
 9 And Peter left the prison, following the angel, but this was all so unbelievable that he thought he must be having a vision.
 10 When they were past the first two guard posts they came to the iron gate that leads out into the city, and it

which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John³, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.⁴

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.⁶

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

swung open for them. They went out, moving down the street, and the angel left Peter.

11 When Peter's senses returned, he said to himself, *Now I know for sure that God sent His angel and has delivered me from Herod, and from the plots of the Judeans!*

12 After pondering this, he arrived at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered together in prayer.

13 As Peter knocked at the gate, a servant named Rhoda came out to see who was there.

14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she didn't even let him in, but ran inside, and told them that Peter was out at the gate.

15 They told her: You're insane! But she insisted it was true. Then they said: It must be his guardian angel!

16 But Peter kept pounding, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, gesturing for them to be quiet, related how the Lord had delivered him from prison. And he told them: Go tell James and the brethren about this. Then he left Jerusalem for another city.

18 Now as soon as dawn came, the soldiers panicked over Peter's disappearance.

19 And when Herod Agrippa searched for Peter, who could not be found anywhere, he interrogated the guards, then had them executed. Then he left Judea for Caesarea, and remained there.

20 Now Herod Agrippa had been in an angry dispute with Tyre and Sidon, but representatives of both cities came on a peace mission. Since they had earlier gotten in good with Agrippa's chamberlain Blastus, they offered peace terms because their country relied upon Agrippa's sphere of influence for sustenance.

21 And on a certain day Agrippa, dressed in sartorial apparel, sat upon a throne and made a speech to them.

22 And the people, mesmerized, shouted: This is the voice of a god, not a man!

23 And because Agrippa accepted their praise without giving God the glory, an angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten up from the inside out by worms. And so he died.

24 But the Message of God grew, and spread among the people.

25 Barnabas and Saul eventually returned from Jerusalem [after delivering the donations], and they took young John Mark with them.

1. Herod Agrippa, who ruled from 37-44 AD, and was Rome's replacement for Antipas, who fell out of favor.

2. An outrageous alteration of the text by the KJV translators. "Easter" absolutely should be translated, "Passover." It is also probably referring to the second Passover held a month later for those who were not able to participate in the first.

3. This event takes place a few years after the Crucifixion, and by this reference to the "mother" of Mark, we know that Mark's father has died, and that Mark was still too young to have assumed the headship of the house.

4. The people at that time believed that one's guardian angel appeared as a duplicate of the person he had charge over.

5. It is interesting to note that the group is incredulous over Peter's freedom despite the fact they had been praying for it!

6. **Josephus on Herod's death**

Now when Agrippa (who ruled from 37-44 AD) had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Caesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain Festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which Festival a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that he was a god; and they added, "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature."

Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner."

When he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad every where, that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign; for he reigned four years under Caius (Caligula) Caesar, three of them were over Philip's tetrarchy only, and on the fourth he had that of Herod added to it; and he reigned, besides those, three years under the reign of Claudius Caesar; in which time he reigned over the forementioned countries, and also had Judea added to them, as well as Samaria and Caesarea.--Antiq. XIX viii, 2.

ACTS CHAPTER 13

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.¹

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost², departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.³

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas⁴ the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.⁵

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye

ACTS CHAPTER 13

1 Now within the membership of the church of Antioch were a number of prophets and teachers. These included: Barnabas, Simeon, nicknamed Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and finally Saul.

2 As they worshipped the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said: Set apart Barnabas and Saul from you for the work I have called them to.

3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they laid hands upon them [to ordain them for service], and sent them away.

4 So the two, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, journeyed to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cypress.

5 Finding themselves in Salamis, they preached the Message of God in the Jewish synagogues, and John Mark assisted them.

6 When they had traveled about the island to Paphos, they encountered a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet called bar Jesus,

7 Who had attached himself to the Proconsul of the island, Sergius Paulus. Now Paulus was a well-read and intelligent man, and he summoned Barnabas and Saul, desiring to hear the Message of God they were preaching.

8 But "Elymas"--whose name means "sorcerer"--argued against them, hoping to turn the Proconsul away from the faith.

9 Then Saul--using the name Paul by then--was filled with the Holy Spirit, and fixed his gaze upon him,

10 Saying: You lying charlatan! You child of the devil, full of subtlety and vice, and enemy of all righteousness! Will you not stop perverting the correct pathways of the Lord?!

11 Now behold--the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a while! At this, immediately a mist and darkness fell upon the man's eyes, and he stumbled about, trying to find someone to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the Proconsul, when he saw with astonishment what had happened, believed the teaching about the Lord.

13 Now when Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia, and here John Mark left them to return home to Jerusalem.

14 When they departed Perga, they made their way to Antioch in Pisidia, going into its synagogue, and sitting down on the Sabbath day with the congregation.

men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no

15 After the reading from the Old Testament, the officials of the synagogue sent someone over to tell them: You men and brothers--if you have any word of

encouragement for the people, please say it.

16 Then Paul stood up, and extending his hand [to quiet the assembly], said: Men of Israel, and any "God-fearers," please listen.

17 The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors, and exalted them when they were living as outsiders in the land of Egypt. Then, with His mighty, outstretched arm, He brought them out of it.

18 And for about forty years He endured their misbehavior in the wilderness.

19 And after He destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their lands to the people by lot.

20 After this, He provided judges over the people for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 Later, they desired a king, and God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin. He reigned for forty years.

22 After God removed him, He raised up David to be their king, about whom He testified, and said: **I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.**

23 Of David's line of descendants has God, according to His promise, raised up a savior for Israel, Jesus,

24 When John the Baptist, prior to his arrival, preached his baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his purpose and ministry, he said, "Who do you think I am? I am not [the Messiah]. But there is one coming after me, whose sandals I am not even worthy to loosen!"

26 Men and brothers, you children descended from Abraham; and also you Gentile "God-fearers"--this message of salvation is sent to you!

27 For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers--because they did not recognize who he was, nor did they understand the voices of the prophets that are read every Sabbath--fulfilled the prophecies about him by condemning him.

28 And though they found no legitimate cause to slay him, they still wanted Pilate to crucify him.

29 And when they had fulfilled all the prophecies about him, they took him down from the "tree," and laid him in a tomb.

30 But God raised him from the dead!

31 And he was seen for quite a few days by those who had followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who even now testify of that to the people.

32 And we proclaim to you the good news--how the promise that was made to our ancestors,

33 Is now fulfilled in the time of us, their descendants, for He has raised Jesus up from the dead. As it is also said in the second Psalm: **Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.**

34 Now so far as his being raised from the dead by God, never to return to corruption, God also said: **I will give you the sure mercies of David.**

35 And He said in another Psalm: **Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**

36 Now David, after he had served his own generation of people by God's will, died and was laid in the grave as

corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.⁶

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 And when the Jews⁷ were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles⁷ besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes⁸ followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

were his ancestors before him, and his body moldered away in corruption.

37 But he, whom God raised up again, saw no corruption of his body.

38 So be it known to you, men and brothers, that we preach to you there is forgiveness of sin only through this man!

39 And by him, all who believe are made right with God—even for [intentional] sins that could not be justified through Mosaic Law and its sacrificial system.

40 So beware, lest what has been warned by the prophets comes to pass upon you:

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 Now after the service ended and the people were departing the synagogue, they asked that Paul explain more of these things at the next Sabbath.

43 Meanwhile, many of the Jews and “God-fearers” followed Paul and Barnabas after the service was over, and the pair continued explaining their doctrines, encouraging them to continue in God’s grace.

44 The next Sabbath, almost the whole town came together to hear the Message of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and spoke against Paul’s doctrines, contradicting and denouncing them.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold, and said: It was required that the Message of God should be spoken to you first, but seeing that you thrust it away from you, and prove yourselves unworthy of everlasting life—we turn to the Gentiles!

47 For so has God ordered us, saying: “I have called you to be a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth!”

48 When the Gentiles heard this they rejoiced, and glorified the Message of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed,

49 And the Message of the Lord was proclaimed throughout all the region.

50 However, the [unbelieving] Jews stirred up the religious and upright women, along with the key men of the city, and brought persecution upon Paul and Barnabas, causing them to be driven from the area.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and went to Iconium.

52 Meanwhile, those who had received their message were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

1. This is a crucial verse showing the Personhood of the Holy Spirit, and part of His function, for it is specifically the Holy Spirit who determines the means by which God’s overall will is brought about on the earth.

2. Note again that they are not sent out by Christ, or by God, but by the Holy Spirit.

3. Cyprus, a large island nearly 200 miles long, had a population of over a million people with its own proconsulate located at Paphos.

4. “Elymas” is a title meaning a *sorcerer* or *wise man*. “Bar-Jesus” means “Son of Jesus” or “Like Jesus.” This trickster may have been trying to pass himself off as a miracle-worker in Christ’s name.

5. It is at this point that John Mark, possibly homesick, or else afraid of the mountain journey, returns to Jerusalem. This will eventually cause Paul to separate from Barnabas when the latter desires to take him on another missionary journey (Acts 15:40). It should be noted, however, that the Spirit did not tell them to take Mark in the first place.

6. This is the first acknowledgment of the inferiority of the Mosaic covenant in comparison to the New covenant of Christ’s atonement. Paul is very likely referring to the fact that within Mosaic Law there is no sacrifice for willful sin, but only sins committed by accident. Thus, the Mosaic sacrificial system was inferior to the sacrifice of Christ, whose sacrifice atones for *all* sin—unintentional *and* deliberate!

7. “Jews” and “Gentiles” are an anti-Semitic addition to the text to enforce the notion of Jews rejecting Christ while the Gentiles embrace Him. They do not appear in any early manuscripts, and came to be placed here based on the problems caused by “the

Jews” later in the chapter. Actually, both Jews and Gentiles received the word preached by Paul and Barnabas.

8. These would be Gentile converts to Judaism, or else “God-fearers” who did not keep the full Torah, but who had rejected polytheism.

ACTS CHAPTER 14

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.
 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.
 3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.
 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.
 5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,
 6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:¹
 7 And there they preached the gospel.
 8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:
 9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,²
 10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.
 11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.
 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.
 13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.³
 14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,
 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:
 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.
 17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.
 18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.
 19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.
 20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up⁴, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

ACTS CHAPTER 14

1 Eventually, in Iconium, the two went into the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a host of Jews, and even Greeks, believed.
 2 But the unbelieving Jews caused trouble by stirring up the Gentiles, and prejudicing them against the brethren.
 3 So the two remained there for a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who confirmed their testimony of his grace by exhibiting signs and wonders through their hands.
 4 But the population of the city was split, with some supporting the Jews, and some the apostles.
 5 And when things turned violent, with a mob of Gentiles, Jews, and local leaders seeking to drag them off and stone them,
 6 Paul and Barnabas got word of it, and fled to Lycaonia, taking refuge in the cities of Lystra, Derbe, and the surrounding area.
 7 And there they preached the Gospel.
 8 Now there was a man sitting at Lystra unable to rise or walk, for his feet had been crippled from his mother's womb.
 9 This man had been hearing Paul's sermons [and was visibly filled with faith]. So Paul fixed his gaze on him, and perceiving that he had the faith to receive healing,
 10 Cried out: Stand up on your feet! And the man did so, then began to leap and walk!
 11 When the populace saw what Paul had done, they cried out in their native tongue: *The gods have taken the form of men [and come down to visit us]!*
 12 They decided Barnabas was Jupiter [Zeus], and Paul was Mercury [Hermes], because he did most of the speaking.
 13 The priest of Jupiter, from the temple outside the city, even brought oxen laden with garlands to the city gates, and made ready to sacrifice them to the pair with the people.
 14 When the two apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard about this, they rent their clothes and ran to the scene, crying out:
 15 Sirs--why are you doing this? We are men, no better than you are, and preach that you should *turn* from these false gods to the living God, who made the heavens, earth, the sea, and all that lives in them!
 16 This God in times past looked the other way, allowing the peoples of the earth to walk in their own ways.
 17 Even so, He still showed us His goodness and reality by sending rain and blessing our crops, giving us harvest seasons, and letting our hearts rejoice with food and joy.
 18 But despite their words, the two were barely able to keep the people from sacrificing to them.
 19 Meanwhile, certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium came to stir up trouble, rousing the people, who stoned Paul and threw him out of the city, thinking him dead.
 20 But as the disciples encircled him, he got to his feet

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,
 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.
 23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.
 24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.
 25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:¹
 26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.
 27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.
 28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

and returned to the city. The next day, he left with Barnabas for Derby.
 21 After preaching the Gospel there and teaching many, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,
 22 Strengthening the hearts of the disciples, and encouraging them to continue in the faith, saying: We shall only enter the Kingdom of God through much tribulation!
 23 And when they ordained elders in every congregation, and prayed and fasted, they commended them into the hands of the Lord, upon whom they had believed.
 24 And after they had journeyed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.
 25 After they had preached the Message in Perga, they went down into the port of Attalia.
 26 From there, they sailed to Antioch, the place from where they had been entrusted to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed.
 27 When they arrived and the church was gathered together, they reported all that God had done through them, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.
 28 And there they [recuperated and] stayed for a long time with the disciples.

1. Paul, in 2 Cor. 1, would later write of this period, saying: "**For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.**"
2. This is an important verse. I know some even today who hold the unscriptural view that God is sovereign, and will heal whom He will, whether that person has no faith or great faith. Here, we see proof that the degree of belief one has plays a part in whether he can receive a blessing God offers to all.
3. One reason the people dub Barnabas Jupiter (Zeus), and rush to honor him, is that local legend held that Zeus had once visited the region in human form and had not been treated with proper deference, sending a famine as punishment.
4. The language can suggest the possibility that Paul died and was raised from the dead by God. If so, this may be the basis of his claim in 2 Cor. 12:2 that he had been caught up to the 3rd heaven.
5. Attalia was an interesting seaport, built atop a flat limestone mesa with an inner anchorage that was an aperture between the cliffs, and a series of walls protecting an outer anchorage that could be blocked by a large chain.

ACTS CHAPTER 15

1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.¹
 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.
 3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.
 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.
 5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees² which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.
 6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.
 7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye

ACTS CHAPTER 15

1 Meanwhile, certain men came down from Judea, and taught the Gentile brethren: Unless you receive physical circumcision, as taught by Moses, you cannot be saved!
 2 When Paul and Barnabas wound up in a heated argument with them on this issue, the church decided that Paul and Barnabas, along with some of those on the other side, should go to Jerusalem and ask the apostles and elders about this question.
 3 And having been sent out by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, relating how the Gentiles had been converted to the faith--and their report brought great joy to all the brethren.
 4 When they finally made it to Jerusalem, the church, including the apostles and elders, received them, and the group related all that God had been doing through them.
 5 But then rose up the [Shammaiite] Pharisees who had come into the faith [and caused this problem], saying that it was necessary for the Gentiles to become full converts to Judaism, becoming circumcised and keeping the Law of Moses [as they did].
 6 So the apostles and elders met together to consider this issue.
 7 After some heated debate, Peter stood up, and said: Men and brothers--you know that a long time back, God made a choice that I should be the one from whom the Gentiles

know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.
 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;
 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.
 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?³
 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.⁴
 12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.
 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:
 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.
 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,
 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:
 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.
 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.
 19 Wherefore my⁵ sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:
 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from thing strangled, and from blood.⁶
 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.⁷
 22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:
 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:
 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law:⁸ to whom we gave no such commandment:
 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,
 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who

would first hear the teaching of the Gospel, and turn to it in faith.

8 And God, who knows the heart, showed His approval of them by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us,
 9 And made no distinction between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore, why challenge God by going one better than Him by putting the yoke of [keeping the written Law—with the oral Law that accompanies it—] on the Gentile disciples, which neither we, nor our fathers, were ever able to bear?

11 We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ [--and not by keeping the Law, nor by adding the Law to that grace--] that they and we shall both be saved!

12 Then everyone was silent, and listened to Paul and Barnabas, who declared the many miracles and wonders God had performed amongst the Gentiles through them.

13 After the two finished speaking, James spoke up, saying: Men and brethren, listen to me.

14 Simeon has related how God, at the beginning, made a visitation to the Gentiles to select out of them a people for Himself, to bring honor to His name.

15 The prophets foretold this, and wrote:

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 From the beginning of time, God knew what He was going to do.

19 Thus, my ruling is that we not trouble those among the Gentiles who have turned to God,

20 But that we write to them, instructing them to abstain from idolatry, from fornication, from [meat that has not had the blood drained from it], and from committing murder,
 21 For, from days of old, Moses has been preached by people in the synagogues of every city each Sabbath when they read the Scriptures [so the Gentiles are probably familiar with these precepts already].

21 [*Alternate reading*]: [As for those brought up in Judaism, we need not write anything to them,] for Moses has been preached in the synagogues of every city each Sabbath when they read the Scriptures [so they know the right things to do anyway].

22 Then it pleased the apostles and elders, and the church as a whole, to send some representatives with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to deliver the message. So they sent Judas, surnamed bar Sabbas, and Silas, two chief elders in the community.

23 And they wrote and sent letters with them, which said: *The apostles, elders, and your brothers send greetings to our Gentile brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.*

24 *Since we have heard that some from our community have gone out from us, and said some things that troubled you [--namely, that you must become circumcised, and start keeping the Law of Moses--] we want you to know that they were not acting with our approval, and we gave no such order.*

25 *And having assembled and come to unanimous agreement on this issue, we have sent some representatives with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,*

shall also tell you the same things by mouth.
 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;⁹
 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.
 30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:
 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.
 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.
 33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.
 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.
 35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.
 36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.
 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.
 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.
 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;¹⁰
 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.
 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

26 Two men who have not hesitated to risk their lives in proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ.
 27 Thus, Judas and Silas will confirm what we have said, and reiterate it to you personally.
 28 For it seemed good to both the Holy Spirit and us, to lay no greater burden on you than these necessary things:
 29 That you must not participate in ceremonies in which meat is sacrificed to idols.
 That you must not commit murder [for vengeance or any other reason].
 That you must not eat meat from an animal that has been strangled, rather than having its blood drained from it first.
 And that you must avoid sexual sin.
 If you observe these things, you will be doing just fine.
 Farewell!
 30 So when they were dismissed, they went to Antioch, and when they had gathered the host of believers together they read the letter.
 31 When they read the letter, everyone rejoiced [and was very relieved].
 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets themselves, encouraged the brethren with many words, and strengthened them.
 33 After they had been there for a time, they returned to the apostles with the blessings of the brethren there.
 34 However, Silas decided to stay for a while.
 35 Paul and Barnabas also stayed in Antioch with many others, preaching the Message of the Lord.
 36 But eventually Paul said to Barnabas: Let's return, and visit the brothers in every city where we preached the Message of the Lord, and see how they're doing.
 37 Barnabas agreed, but wished to take John Mark with them.
 38 But Paul would not even consider taking the one who had left them in Pamphylia instead of continuing on with them to the work.
 39 And the dispute grew so heated [with neither man budging], that they broke their joint ministry, and Barnabas sailed off to Cypress with Mark.
 40 Paul then chose Silas, and left after being commended to God's grace by the brothers in the church.
 41 So they went throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

1. It is here in this, the paramount chapter of the Book of Acts, that the great conclusion will finally be made that the keeping of Mosaic Law plays no role in the salvation of mankind, and that the Gentiles are not required to keep either that covenant or its ordinances.
 The point must first be made that verse 1 is by no means limited to physical circumcision! The Shammaite believers who have caused the problem are preaching that the Gentiles must receive circumcision *and* keep the Torah (see verse 24), probably based on Exodus 12:49, in which God commands that non-Hebrews who dwell in the theocracy of Israel keep the same Torah. Remember that the Hillelite Pharisees accept the notion of "God-fearers"--Gentiles who worship the God of Israel but who either keep the 7 Noachide commandments, or else most of the Torah apart from circumcision--while the Shammaites at this point reject the notion.

2. These were followers of Shammai. (See *What you never knew about the Pharisees*.)

3. This "yoke" is the keeping of not only the 613 laws of Moses, but the 1000+ points of extraneous minutiae added to it by the elders. Remember that Peter, in Acts 10, considers this an equal part of the Law, together with the Scriptures.

4. This magnificent confession of how salvation comes isn't fully detailed out yet, for only Paul seems to have clearly understood the process on a detailed forensic basis. But here we see that even in the early years of the church there was an understanding that God was bringing people into covenant with Him based on His mercy, and not based on their obedience to a certain lifestyle.

5. It is interesting to note that James--not Peter--steps forward to settle the issue.

6. These simple ordinances are based on the 7 Noachide commandments, which tradition held God gave out in the time of Noah for the nations to live by. Below follows a list of the commandment given by James and its Noachide counterpart:

Commandment: **Abstain from meats offered to idols**

Counterpart: *Abstain from idolatry*
 Commandment: **Abstain from fornication**
 Counterpart: *Abstain from fornication/incest*
 Commandment: **Abstain from blood**

Counterpart: *Abstain from murder* (Most theologians believe this refers not to murder, as I suggest, but to drinking blood, which is possible. However, noting the way people in that part of the world behave even today, where one can be killed for even a slight insult as a matter of personal honor, *murder* is an acceptable understanding of what they were talking about. The Greek will also sustain that view. Some texts also have an addendum here about not doing to others what they would not want done to themselves, which again fits perfectly with the notion of not doing murder.)

Commandment: **Abstain from eating things strangled**
 Counterpart: *Abstain from eating a living animal*

It should be noted that the commandment to abstain from eating things strangled is very controversial. First, not all manuscripts have this in them. Second, the word for “**strangled**” refers to animals killed in a non-kosher manner by being slain and then prepared with the blood still in the carcass; or possibly to an animal quartered without first slaying it in a humane manner. If the first point is the correct understanding, the text could legitimately be understood as commanding that Christians eat only kosher meats. A problem with this view is that Paul later (1 Cor. 8) grants permission for the Gentiles to eat meat that has been prepared in an idolatrous temple, which obviously means non-kosher. If the second understanding is correct, it fits with the Noachide prohibition of eating a live animal. Another possibility is that the Council is merely commanding the Gentiles to abstain from eating practices that somehow include the intake of animal blood, which was considered a delicacy by some although it was a violation of Gen. 9:4. Still another possibility, advocated by Stern, Matthew Henry, and others, is that this prohibition was not a mandate dealing with true repentance or salvation, but rather a courtesy so that the observant Jewish Christians would not be offended or caused to stumble by possibly being given non-kosher meat by Gentile believers. The last possibility is that this refers to some sort of Pagan religious practice, but there is insufficient evidence to verify that.

Left out are the remaining commandments of: *Abstain from theft; Abstain from cursing God; Establish courts of justice.*

7. There is insufficient time to delve deeply into the problem this verse causes for some of my Messianic brethren who incredibly use it to deny the words just spoken and claim it “proves” God does indeed desire all to keep Mosaic Law! For now, the point must be made that this verse is vague, and should not be used to build such a critical doctrine on. In any event, the later writings of Paul absolutely demolish the notion that God commands the Gentiles be ordered to observe Torah (despite the attempts by some Messianics to pervert those words as well), and in Acts 21:25—which occurs at least seven years after Acts 15—James *still* relates that the Gentiles should *not* keep the Torah!

8. Again, this is not saying that the Gentiles must stop at circumcision, but this is a Jewish manner of speech that asserts they must keep *all* of the Torah. It could be paraphrased thusly: “*Some have caused you consternation by claiming that you must be circumcised, and also keep the whole of the Torah.*”

9. This is one of the most important verses in the New Testament! Despite the man-made commandments and doctrines of a host of denominations, Scripture indicates that only these four sins can cause an otherwise believing Christian to risk losing his salvation. Also, note that the Christian elders wisely limit the guidelines for the Gentiles to negative commandments—which therefore could never be misunderstood as some sort of basis for earning salvation through righteous living—and the list only illustrates the salvation-killing sins of idolatry and sexual sin (and possibly murder as I suggested). Any teacher or religious denomination claiming that a sincere Christian is damned if he fails to observe some sort of commandment apart from these four is in direct contradiction to the Scripture here, for according to the Holy Spirit, “**no greater burden than these necessary things**” is to be laid upon sincere, believing Christians! All else is either voluntary, or else the fruit that comes out of true fellowship with Christ.

10. This is, by and large, the last we hear of Barnabas. It is also interesting to note that even the great apostles, Paul and Barnabas, were not so Spirit-led or Spirit-anointed that they could avoid this decision which had to be made because both men were being stubborn.

ACTS CHAPTER 16

1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:¹
 2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.
 3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.
 4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.
 5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.
 6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia²,
 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to

ACTS CHAPTER 16

1 In time, they came to Derbe and Lystra, where they encountered a young disciple by name of Timothy. He was the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer. His father, however, was a Greek.
 2 Timothy had a very good reputation amongst the brethren in Lystra and Iconium.
 3 Paul desired that Timothy would go with him and Silas on their missionary journeys, and so he performed a circumcision ceremony upon him because the Jews thereabouts knew he was only half-Jewish, with a Greek father [which caused a natural prejudice against him in some people's minds].
 4 As the trio passed through the various cities, they proclaimed the decrees to be kept that had been passed by the apostles and elders back in Jerusalem.
 5 And so the churches were firmly established in the faith, with new members joining daily.
 6 They passed through Phrygia and part of Galatia, because the Holy Spirit forbade them to preach the Gospel in [northwest] Turkey.

go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.
 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.
 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.
 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we³ endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.
 11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;
 12 And from thence to Philippi⁴, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.
 13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side⁵, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.
 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.
 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.
 16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed⁶ with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:
 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.
 18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned, and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.⁷
 19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,
 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,
 21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.
 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.
 23 And when they had laid many stripes⁸ upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:
 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.
 25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.
 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

7 After they came to Mysia, they sought to enter Bithynia [--northern Turkey--] but the Spirit didn't want them to go there either.
 8 So they passed by Mysia and went on to Troas [in western Turkey]
 9 There, Paul had a vision one night, seeing a Macedonian man begging him to: "Come over to Macedonia, and help us!"
 10 [It was here in Troas that I, Luke, joined them,] and after Paul had seen the vision, we immediately sought to journey into Macedonia [--northern Greece--] confident that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel to them there.
 11 Thus, we sailed straight out from Troas to Samothracia, and the next day we headed to Neapolis.
 12 From there, we went to Philippi, a Roman colony and the main city of that part of Macedonia, where we stayed for a number of days.
 13 And during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we left the city and went out to a river, supposing we might find some Jews praying there, and we sat down and talked with some godly women who met there.
 14 There was a woman named Lydia, a dealer of purple dye from the city of Thyatira who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to the Gospel, and she accepted the things spoken by Paul.
 15 When she and her household were baptized, she entreated us, saying: If you believe me faithful to the Lord, come stay at my house! She would not take *no* for an answer [so we did].
 16 Now one day as we headed to prayer, a woman who had control of a demon spirit of divination encountered us. She was well known in town, and had brought her masters a lot of money through her fortune-telling.
 17 She began following Paul and us, crying out: These men are servants of the Most High God, who are here to show us the way of salvation!
 18 She did this for days and days. Finally, Paul--having had enough of her--turned to her, and said to the demon: I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! And it did, right then and there!
 19 When the woman's owners saw that their hopes of future profit were now gone, they caught and dragged Paul and Silas to where the local rulers were gathered in the public marketplace.
 20 They forced them before the magistrates, saying: These men--being Jews--are stirring up all sorts of trouble in this city!
 21 They're trying to proselytize, and indoctrinate us into [religious customs that aren't a part of any of the state-sanctioned religions, so we Romans cannot observe them]!
 22 So the crowds rose up against them, and the magistrates rent their clothes, giving orders that the two should be beaten.
 23 And when they had beaten them severely, they cast them into a dungeon with orders for the jailor to watch over them.
 24 Having received his orders, the jailer put them in the most secure area of the prison, and bound their feet in stocks.
 25 Now at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God, and the other prisoners heard them.
 26 And suddenly a great earthquake hit the town, and the prison foundation was shaken. The doors were forced off their hinges and the prisoners freed from their bonds from

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.⁹
 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.
 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.
 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.
 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.
 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.
 35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.
 36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.
 37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.
 38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.¹⁰
 39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.
 40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

the strength of the earthquake.
 27 The jailer awakened and saw the prison doors open, so he assumed the prisoners had fled. Then he drew his sword to commit suicide [in hope of sparing his family].
 28 But Paul shouted out: Don't harm yourself--we're all here!
 29 Then the jailer called for a torch, and ran to investigate. Shaking in fear [--thinking they may have somehow been responsible for the earthquake--] he fell down before Paul and Silas,
 30 And then brought them out of the cell, saying: Sirs--what must I do to be saved?
 31 They told him: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your entire household will be saved!
 32 And they proclaimed the Message of the Lord to him and his household [who lived at or near the jail].
 33 That same hour of the night, the jailer washed and cleaned their wounds. Then he and his household were immediately baptized.
 34 When he later brought them into his quarters, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with his entire household.
 35 The next morning, the magistrates [--fearing the two might have brought bad luck to the town--] sent officers, telling the jailer: Let those men go!
 36 And the jailer told Paul: The magistrates have said to let you go, so depart in peace!
 37 But Paul said to the men: They have beaten us--Roman citizens--in public, with no trial, and thrown us in jail, and they expect us to sneak out of town?! You tell them to come escort us out publicly!
 38 So the officers went, and told the magistrates this. Then the magistrates were afraid when they heard that Paul and Silas were both Roman citizens [for it was a death penalty offense to beat them without trial].
 39 And so they came themselves [in humility], and escorted them out. Then they politely requested that they leave the city.
 40 So the two left the prison and visited Lydia's house. And after speaking encouragement to the brethren, they left.

1. This marriage is very unusual, and we can only wonder how a Jewish woman would come to be married to a Gentile unbeliever. Paul, in 2 Tim. 1:5, relates that Timothy's mother and grandmother were godly women, which makes this scenario all the more puzzling since the Jews, even apart from the prejudice of Shammai, were loathe to give their children in marriage to Gentiles.
2. "Asia" meaning parts of Turkey.
3. Often missed by readers, this humble notation of "we" indicates it is at Troas that Luke joins up with Paul.
4. Paul arrives here around 50-51 AD. It is interesting to note in verse 9 that Paul sees a vision of a man inviting him to come and minister, yet his greatest conversions here are amongst women like Lydia. Paul seems to have had a special fondness for the people of Philippi, despite being beaten and imprisoned there, and Polycarp mentions that he wrote several letters to the Philippian.
5. Paul goes to the river because it was by rivers that Jews in the Diaspora were accustomed to meet and worship together on the Sabbath if there was no synagogue. Also, this was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, known as "the Day of the Sabbaths," for the word "Sabbath" is plural, not singular.
6. In the Greek, the text says not that the demon possessed the woman, but that she had control over the demon!
7. It is interesting to note that the demon was expelled despite the woman's lack of desire for deliverance.
8. These are Roman-affiliated authorities, and thus they do not practice the Jewish punishment of "39 stripes," but instead they opened Paul and Silas up from head to toe with a *flagrum*, or else beat them with rods.
9. He seeks to commit suicide because if the prisoners escape without killing him themselves, it would have been considered dereliction of duty, and both the man *and* his family would have been slain by the authorities.
10. Because it was death under Roman law for magistrates in the provinces to beat a Roman citizen without trial. Unnoticed by most people is that *Silas* was also a Roman citizen.

ACTS CHAPTER 17

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:
 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them,

ACTS CHAPTER 17

1 After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue.
 2 And as Paul's habit was, he went there and preached for

and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks¹ a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security² of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.³

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babler⁴ say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were

three Sabbath days, reasoning with the Jews from the Scriptures,

3 Expounding on the concept that the Messiah would have to suffer and then rise from the dead, concluding: "And this Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, *is* the Messiah!"

4 And some believed, and joined themselves to Paul and Silas. These included many devout Greek proselytes and "God-fearers," and quite a few important women as well.

5 But the unbelieving Jews, jealous, gathered some thuggish people into a group and stirred up the city, breaking into the house of Jason in hope of dragging Paul and his associates out to mob justice.

6 But when they found Paul and his company gone, they hauled off Jason and some other brethren to the city magistrates, shouting: These men are part of the group who have been turning the world upside down, and now they're here in Thessalonica,

7 And Jason has been giving them shelter! All of them preach against the decrees of Caesar, saying the real king of the earth is someone named Jesus!

8 The magistrates and citizens of the city were greatly worried when they heard the crowd make these accusations.

9 So when they had assessed a fine to Jason and the rest, they let them go [with a stern warning].

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away to Berea by night. There, they went straight to the local Jewish synagogue.

11 Now the Jews here were more honorable than the Jews of Thessalonica, for they received the Gospel message with open-minded joy, and searched the Scriptures daily to verify whether what they had been told was so.

12 Therefore, many Jews believed, including a large number of influential Greek men and women.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching the Message of God at Berea, they came there and stirred up the people.

14 And immediately the brethren sent Paul off in a ship, but Silas and Timothy remained behind.

15 Those who took Paul away sailed to Athens, then they returned home with Paul's order for Silas and Timothy to return as quickly as possible.

16 Now while Paul waited in Athens, his spirit was stirred up when he saw how the whole city was bound by idolatry,

17 And so he argued the faith in the synagogue with the Jews and the "God-fearers"; and also daily in the marketplace with anyone who was willing to debate him.

18 Then some of the intelligentsia of the city--Epicurean and Stoic philosophers--took notice of him. Some said: What is this beggar talking about? Others supposed: He seems to be proclaiming a religion dealing with new gods. They thought this because Paul was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

19 So they took and escorted him up to the *Areopagus*--the public debate forum at Mars' Hill--and asked: Would you explain what this new doctrine you're speaking about pertains to?

20 For you are relating things we have never heard before, and we would like to understand what you mean.

21 You see, Theophilus, the Athenians, and those who visit there, spend their time either telling or listening to the most current news and thoughts.

there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)
 22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.
 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.⁶ Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.
 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;
 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;
 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;
 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:
 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.
 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.
 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:
 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.
 32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.
 33 So Paul departed from among them.
 34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

22 So Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said: You men of Athens—I see that you are way too superstitious!
 23 For as I passed by the various shrines of the city, I found a shrine with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Well, it is this God, whom you worship without knowing anything about, that I have come to speak of.
 24 This is the God who made the earth, and all that dwells in it. And since He is Lord of heaven and earth, He does not live in man-made temples.
 25 Neither does He need men to provide for His needs through their sacrifices, seeing that it is He who gives life, breath, and everything else to men in the first place,
 26 And was the One who created all men through a single progenitor at the beginning, and determined when and where each empire of men should rise, fall, and dwell in the meantime.
 27 It was His intent that they would seek after Him, and by groping their way to Him, they would find Him—though He is never far from any of us.
 28 For through His will, we live, move, and breathe, as even your own monotheistic poet Aratus noted when he said, *For we are also his offspring*.
 29 So, since we are the offspring of one single, unfathomable God like this, we should not bring Him down to our level by trying to fashion profane images of Him made of gold, silver, or stone.
 30 God tolerated that ignorant practice in times past, but now He demands all men everywhere repent,
 31 For He has appointed a day [of judgment] in which He will righteously judge the world through the one agent He ordained to do this, whom I speak of. And God has shown proof of that to all men by resurrecting that man from the dead!
 32 When they heard Paul speak of rising from the dead, some laughed. But others said: We'd like to hear from you again about this.
 33 So Paul left the crowd on Mars' Hill.
 34 Even so, a few men followed him and believed, among whom was Dionysius, a senator of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris, along with some others.

1. Again, God-fearers.

2. Meaning that they assessed a fine.

3. It is amazing how some teachers pervert the words of Scripture here to justify some of their anti-Charismatic skepticism. The people of Berea eagerly received the words of Paul, and searched the Scriptures—not with skepticism to see if they would be forced to believe doctrine they didn't like and couldn't invent arguments against to fit their preconceived notions; but they searched the Scriptures to *confirm* the message they had already joyously accepted and wanted to believe!

4. Though translated “**babbl**er,” the word actually means “**seed-picker**,” which is a slang term for a beggar.

5. Otherwise known as Mars' Hill, where people could set up their soapbox and debate their beliefs with the crowd. It is interesting to note that Paul, who attempts here to reach the masses on an intellectual level, has only limited success and abandons preaching Christ in this fleshly manner, relying on the anointing of the Spirit from this point further.

6. Paul here seeks to make use of a local legend about “the unknown god,” which held that a plague once struck Athens, and after sacrifice to the normal pantheon of gods proved fruitless, someone got the idea of making a sacrifice to an unnamed deity as a last resort. The plague ended at that point, and thereafter a monument to this unknown deity was erected in Athens.

ACTS CHAPTER 18

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;
 2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded

ACTS CHAPTER 18

1 After his experiences in Athens, Paul left for Corinth,
 2 Where he met a Jewish man named Aquila who had been born in Pontus. Aquila had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla after Claudius Caesar [in 49 AD] had expelled the Jews from Rome [because of fights between

all Jews to depart from Rome:)¹ and came unto them.
 3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tent-makers.²
 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.
 5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.
 6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.³
 7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.
 8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.
 9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:
 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.
 11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.
 12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia,⁴ the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,
 13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.
 14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:
 15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.
 16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.
 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue,⁵ and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.
 18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.
 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.
 20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;
 21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.
 22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

Christian and non-Christian Jews there].
 3 Since Paul was a tent-maker by trade, as were Aquila and Priscilla, he lodged [and worked] with them.
 4 And Paul spoke every Sabbath, persuading Jews and Greeks [about the Gospel].
 5 When Silas and Timothy caught up with him from Macedonia, Paul was burdened in his spirit, and began preaching full time, proclaiming to the Jews that Jesus was Messiah.
 6 But when the Jews rose up in opposition and denounced his message, Paul shook the dust from his robe at them, saying: Your blood be on your own heads--I am innocent of it! From now on, I will take the Message only to the Gentiles!
 7 And he left the synagogue, and went to stay next door at the house of Justus, a man who worshipped God.
 8 But Crispus, the president of the synagogue, and his household, believed the Message, and received baptism along with many other Corinthians who heard and believed, too.
 9 Then the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision one night, saying: Don't be afraid! Don't hold back--but preach everything you've been told to say!
 10 For I am with you, and will allow no man to assault and harm you, for I have many people in this city [and they need you].
 11 So Paul stayed there for a year-and-a-half, teaching the Message of God among the people.
 12 Now [in 52 AD] when Gallio was made Proconsul of Achaia, the [unbelieving] Jews rose up, *en masse*, against Paul, and brought him to Gallio's court.
 13 They said: This man convinces men in our community to worship God in a manner that conflicts with our Torah!
 14 But before Paul even got a chance to open his mouth, Gallio replied: [You bother me with *this*?!] If this were some great matter of *Roman* law being broken in your community, I would hear the case!
 15 But if it's a question of your *religious* Law--its teachings, and who deserves to hold what title--don't waste my time with it! You deal with religious matters yourselves! [Get these Jews out of my sight!]
 16 So he had them driven out from his judgment seat.
 17 Then the crowd [--afraid that the Proconsul had now marked the Jews as troublemakers--] took Sosthenes, the new president of the synagogue, and beat him in the town square before the judgment seat as Gallio watched, totally refusing to intervene.
 18 After this, Paul stayed in Corinth for quite a while, then took leave of the brethren and sailed to Syria along with Aquila and Priscilla. Earlier at Cenchrea, it should be noted, he had shaved his head after taking a [Nazirite] vow.
 19 They wound up in Ephesus, where he left the two, but Paul himself went into the synagogue to reason with the Jews.
 20 When the Jews there asked him to remain, he had to decline,
 21 And instead bade them farewell with these words: I must absolutely keep the upcoming Feast in Jerusalem, but I will return if God permits! So he sailed from Ephesus.
 22 After landing in Caesarea and staying long enough to greet the church there, he continued to Antioch.
 23 After spending some time there, he left and visited the regions throughout Galatia and Phrygia in that order,

23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.
 24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.
 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord,⁶ knowing only the baptism of John.
 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.⁷
 27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:
 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

strengthening all the disciples.
 24 Now there was a certain Jewish [proselyte] named Apollos who had come to Ephesus. He was a native of Alexandria with a gift for speaking, and he had a vast knowledge of the Scriptures.
 25 He had been given instruction in the doctrines of the Lord, and being a zealous man he spoke fervently about the Lord and His doctrines [of repentance], but only from the perspective of John the Baptist.
 26 When Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak boldly in the synagogue, they met up with him, and explained [the fullness found in Christ of what John had been proclaiming before his appearance].
 27 When Apollos decided to go into Achaia, the brethren in the church gave him a letter of introduction, encouraging the believers there to receive him. After arriving, he was a great help to all those who, through God's grace, had seen the light, and believed.
 28 By his bold public speaking and knowledge of Scripture, he managed to convince many Jews there that Jesus was the Messiah.

1. The expulsion occurred in 49 AD after violence flared up between Christian and Orthodox Jews.
2. This may be literal, although the trade was rather uncommon. It may be that the occupation was that of fashioning prayer shawls (an outer garment like a poncho, not prayer shawls as the Jews use today), a slang term for which was "tent-maker."
3. At this point, Paul has just about had it with the constant attacks by his own people who just cannot accept the message he has been giving. This soon will mark a turning point in Christianity, where the emphasis will shift to bringing Gentiles into the faith, while the ministry to the Jews will wither and the Messianic movement decline and gradually fade from the scene.
4. Gallio, brother of Seneca, was proconsul of the region in 51-52 AD, which was comprised of a dozen allied cities. Gallio's tolerance for Christianity proved most helpful in permitting the movement to take hold in the region, but unfortunately he died of malaria after only one year.
5. Sosthenes, who may later have become a believer (1 Cor. 11).
6. Many Bibles follow the wording of manuscripts that say Apollos was teaching "the things about Jesus," but "the things of the Lord," as rendered by the KJV, seems to fit the context better in that it could refer either to God the Father, or else to a Messiah Apollos knows is coming, but does not know *has* come. There is no good reason to assume that Apollos knew of Jesus before Priscilla and Aquila explained who He was to him, given the fact that he is preaching from the perspective of John.
7. Because of the attitudes of some Christians who believe that women may not teach men, it is noteworthy that a woman here helps to instruct an educated man who becomes a believer.

ACTS CHAPTER 19

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.¹
 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.
 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.²
 7 And all the men were about twelve.
 8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

ACTS CHAPTER 19

1 And it came to pass, that while Apollos was ministering at Corinth, Paul, having traveled overland, arrived at Ephesus, and finding some disciples there,
 2 Asked them: Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And the men replied: We did not know that there *was* a Holy Spirit *for* us to receive!
 3 So Paul asked: Then in whose name were you baptized? They said: We have received John's baptism.
 4 Paul then told them: John instituted a baptism of repentance, but he made it clear to the people that they should believe on the one coming after him, who was Jesus the Messiah.
 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 6 And after Paul laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in Tongues, and prophesied.
 7 There were about twelve men involved in this incident.
 8 Paul then went into the synagogue there and for three months boldly argued and proclaimed the things concerning the Kingdom of God.
 9 But when some of them were hardened in their hearts against his message and rejected it, they went on to denounce "the Way" to the community. So Paul left the

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.
 10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.
 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:
 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.
 13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.
 14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.
 15 And the evil spirit answered, and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know;³ but who are ye?
 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.
 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.
 18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.
 19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men:⁴ and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.
 20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.
 21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.
 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.
 23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.
 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;
 25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.
 26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:
 27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.⁵
 28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.
 29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and

synagogue, taking those who believed with him, and they continued to meet and debate in the lecture hall of Tyrannus [daily from 11 AM to 4 PM].
 10 He continued at this for two years, so everyone in that part of Turkey, Jew and Gentile, heard the teachings about the Lord Jesus.
 11 And God performed some unique miracles at Paul's hands,
 12 So that even scraps of cloth or articles of clothing that had made contact with him were taken to the sick and laid upon them, and they were healed of diseases, and evil spirits came out of them.
 13 About this time, some itinerant Jewish exorcists took notice of Paul's effectiveness against demons, and decided to incorporate the name of Jesus in their exorcism ceremonies. So they found some demon-possessed people, and began saying: "We command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches!"
 14 Now there were seven sons of a chief mystic named Sceva who were doing this [and one day they tried it on a particularly powerful demon].
 15 But the man who was possessed by the demon simply turned to them, and said: Jesus I know personally, and Paul I've heard of--but just *who...are...you?!*
 16 Then the demon-possessed man leapt up and beat the lot of them so badly that they fled naked and bruised from the house.
 17 Word of this incident spread to all the Jews and Gentiles dwelling in Ephesus, and a great fear came upon them; and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly esteemed because of it.
 18 And many, as a result of this, became believers, and admitted their sins and the sorts of lives they had been living.
 19 Many others who believed, former practitioners of occult arts, brought their books dealing with the supernatural and fortune-telling, and burned them publicly. These manuscripts were near priceless, and were tallied as having a value of fifty thousand pieces of silver!
 20 So the doctrine of God spread everywhere [prevailing over all opposition].
 21 After the success of his ministry there, Paul eventually decided--after passing through Macedonia and Achaia--to return to Jerusalem, saying: After I go there, I must also go on to Rome.
 22 So he sent Timothy and Erastus, his two assistants, before him into Macedonia, but he remained in Turkey for a while longer.
 23 About this same time, a big disturbance arose concerning "the Way."
 24 For a silversmith named Demetrius, who had a business making silver idols of the goddess Diana [Artemis], who made a lot of money for him and his fellows,
 25 Called together his fellow guild members, and said: Men, you know that making idols is what has made us prosperous.
 26 In addition, you see that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of this part of Turkey, this man Paul has convinced many people that idols made with human hands are not real gods, and turned them away from idol-worship!
 27 Because of him, not only is our livelihood threatened,

having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?⁶

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

but the great temple of Diana--whom Turkey and all the world worships--is itself at risk of losing all relevance and influence, causing her magnificence to be treated with scorn!

28 When they heard this, the men were whipped into frenzy, and began to shout: Great is Diana of the Ephesians!

29 The whole city was filled with confusion, and having caught two Macedonian companions of Paul, Gaius and Aristarchus, they rushed in a mob to the amphitheater.

30 And though Paul would have tried to enter in and reason with the crowd, the disciples restrained him for his own good.

31 Now certain key people in Turkey, friends of Paul's, sent word to him to not go into the amphitheater under any circumstances.

32 Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing, and others another, and the whole place was in confusion with most not even knowing why they were there.

33 Eventually the Jews thrust Alexander out of their midst to try to calm things down, and he gestured with his hands for the crowd to quiet down so he could make a defense.

34 But when everyone saw that he was a Jew, for almost two hours they cried out: Great is Diana of the Ephesians!

35 When finally an official of the city calmed the people down, he said: You men of Ephesus--who doesn't know that this city is dedicated to Diana, whose image [in the form of a meteorite] was sent down to earth from Jupiter [Zeus]?

36 Seeing as no one can deny this, you should calm down, and not take action into your own hands.

37 For you have brought these men here, who technically have committed no crime. They have not robbed temples, nor have they blasphemed your goddess.

38 So if Demetrius or any of his allied craftsmen with him have a legitimate charge to lay against them, the court is open and the magistrates are there. Let both sides present their case!

39 And if you have other matters to bring up--then do so in a lawful assembly.

40 Otherwise, word may get back to Caesar about this uproar, and Rome may turn its attention to us--and we'll have no answer to give!

41 After saying this, he dismissed the mob, and told them to go home.

1. This statement is mind-boggling, for any Jew--even if He had yet to understand the true nature of the Spirit--knew about the Holy Spirit. These may have been some sort of God-fearers who had heard the message of John and were walking in the light of John's message without much knowledge of Judaism beyond that. It is also noteworthy that Paul takes for granted that if these are believers, they should have experienced the Charismatic release of the Spirit in their lives as happens in verse 6. This is something he no doubt would ask many Christians today, who might respond with, "Well, we've believed and been baptized, and we're *sealed* with the Spirit." To which Paul might reply, "That's not what I asked."

2. Yet another example showing a second blessing of the Holy Spirit received through *laying on of hands*.

3. Better translated as: "**Jesus I know personally, and Paul I've heard of.**"

4. This is a great example of what true repentance means--absolutely destroying any tie to the works of darkness that we have been bound with. In our own time, the correlation would be to stop watching psychics on TV, trash the books on astrology, the pornography, the Marilyn Manson CDs, etc.

5. The traditional understanding of this verse may not correctly convey what Demetrius is saying. When he speaks of Diana's magnificence being "**destroyed**" (literally, "**torn down**"), he may be referring to the actual idol in the temple, and the verse could be paraphrased like so: *Because of him, not only is our livelihood threatened, but the great temple of Diana--whom Turkey and all the world worships--is itself at risk of being scorned, and her magnificent idol torn down!*

6. The reference is apparently to a meteorite that crashed into the area, and was taken for an image of Diana (Artemis). Ephesus was especially devoted to Diana, and her temple was one of the largest in the known world.

1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.
 2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,
 3 And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.
 4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.
 5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.
 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.
 7 And upon the first day of the week,¹ when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.
 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.
 9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.
 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.²
 11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.
 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.
 13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.³
 14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.
 15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.
 16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.
 17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.
 18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,
 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:
 20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,
 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.
 22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me

1 After the crowd died down, Paul summoned the disciples to him and embraced them in farewell. Then he departed for Macedonia.
 2 After going through the province and exhorting the churches with many words, he continued on into Greece.
 3 He was there for three months, but when the [unbelieving] Jews set a trap for him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to go overland by way of Macedonia.
 4 The following people accompanied him into Turkey: Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus, both of whom were from Turkey.
 5 These went before us, and waited for us to catch up at Troas.
 6 In April, we sailed away from Philippi after the season of Unleavened Bread, arriving to meet them in Troas after five days. Then we remained there for a week.
 7 On Sunday, when the disciples met together to [take Communion] Paul--who was leaving the next morning--preached until midnight to them.
 8 And many menorahs were lit in the upper chamber where everyone was gathered together.
 9 A young man named Eutychus was sitting on the windowsill nodding off, for Paul was being especially long-winded that night. As he drifted off, he fell out the window from the third story of the building, and was picked up dead.
 10 Paul rushed down and fell upon the boy, embracing him. He said: Don't worry--he's not dead; his life is in him!
 11 Paul went back upstairs [and took Communion]. Then he continued speaking until dawn, when he departed.
 12 And the young Eutychus was sent home alive, and everyone was very relieved.
 13 Meanwhile, we got on the ship again and sailed to Assos [on the island of Lesbos], intending to meet Paul, who told us to do so while he traveled across the island on foot.
 14 When Paul rejoined us at Assos, we headed for Mitylene.
 15-16 After sailing there, the next day we were opposite Chios, and the following day reached Samos, landing and staying at Trogyllium. The next day, we arrived at Miletus, bypassing Ephesus because Paul had decided to sail on instead of visiting, for he did not want to spend any more time in western Turkey. He was determined to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost if possible.
 17 From Miletus he sent word to Ephesus, calling the elders of the church to him.
 18 When they arrived, he told them: You know from the first day that I arrived in Turkey what sort of man I was the whole time I was here.
 19 I served the Lord in all humility through many tears and temptations on the part of those Jews who plotted to destroy me.
 20 You know that I showed and taught you every useful thing I could, holding nothing back as I preached in public, and at the church gatherings in the various houses.

there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.⁴

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

21 I testified both to Jews and Gentiles the message of, "Repentance in God's sight, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

22 I am now resolved in my spirit to go on to Jerusalem with no idea what awaits me there.

23 All I know is that the Holy Spirit speaks prophetically through people in every city I visit, warning me that chains and afflictions are waiting for me.

24 But these things will not intimidate me! Neither will I back off to protect my own life! I will finish my course with joy, completing the mission the Lord Jesus sent me on: testifying to all about the Gospel of the grace of God!

25 Look now—I sense that all of you, to whom I preached the Message of the Messianic Kingdom, will never see me again.

26 So I call you to witness this day that I declare myself innocent of any man's blood.

27 For I have not held back proclaiming all that God wanted me to tell you.

28 Keep careful watch then, you overseers of the flock the Holy Spirit has given you. Feed the church of God that Christ purchased with his own blood!

29 For I know that after I am gone, Satan will send wild wolves amongst your flock, not sparing any of the lambs.

30 Even from among your own group shall men arise and teach heresy, seeking to draw disciples to themselves.

31 Therefore, watch carefully, and remember that for three years I tearfully warned you about this, day and night.

32 Now, brothers, I leave you in God's hands with the Message of His grace, which will build you up and provide you an inheritance with all those who are set apart as His people.

33 Remember, I never sought for any man's money or clothing!

34 In fact, you know that I worked personally to earn the money to cover the needs of myself and those with me.

35 I did things like this as an example to you, so that you could see in every way how—by honest, hard work—you should support the weak, and remember the teaching of the Lord Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

36 When Paul had finished saying these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept and embraced Paul, kissing him,

38 Grieved above all at his statement that they would never see him again. Then they walked him down to the ship.

1. The first clear record of the Gentile believers worshipping on a Sunday. As noted elsewhere, this was probably not the result of a formal move of the Sabbath to Sunday, but rather grew out of the need for the Gentiles to meet on their own special day for worship and instruction, while the Jewish Christians continued to observe the regular Sabbath.

2. Because of verse 9, it is usually presumed that the boy was dead and Paul restored him to life. In the Jewish culture, however, "Dead" can also mean *unconscious*. As Paul in the next sentence denies he is dead, the apostle may have healed him, rather than restored him to life from the dead.

3. It was much quicker walking overland from Troas to Assos, compared to sailing around the island of Lesbos, and so Paul, probably in hope of meeting others to witness to, heads overland while Luke and the remaining entourage sail to join him.

4. Nowhere else is this saying of Jesus recorded.

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.¹

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist², which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we were tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.³

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages⁴, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:⁵

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses,⁶ saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

1 And it came to pass after we tore ourselves away from them, that we sailed off on a straight course to Coos, and the next day we reached the island of Rhodes. From there, we disembarked at Patara.

2 Finding a ship sailing for [Phoenicia on the coast of Lebanon], we boarded and set forth.

3 When we reached the isle of Cypress, we passed it on our left side and sailed on to Syria, departing at Tyre, where the ship was going to offload its cargo.

4 Finding some disciples there, we fellowshipped with them for a week, and some by the Spirit repeatedly spoke prophetically to Paul that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 When our visit was over, everyone—including the wives and children of the men—walked with us out of the city to the seashore. Then we knelt down, and prayed.

6. When we bid each other farewell, we boarded our ship, and they went back to their homes.

7 Finishing the voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, where we greeted the brethren, visiting for a day.

8 The next day, those of us in Paul's company left for Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist. He was one of "The Seven," and we stayed with him.

9 This Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

10 We stayed there for many days, and finally a prophet named Agabus came from Judea.

11 When he arrived, he took Paul's belt and tied up his own hands and feet, saying: Thus says the Holy Spirit--so shall the Jews at Jerusalem tie up the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles!

12 When we heard this, both we and those from there urged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 But Paul answered: Why are you crying, and trying to break my heart? I am prepared not only to be bound, but to die in Jerusalem as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus!

14 And when Paul could not be persuaded to change his mind, we gave up, saying: The Lord's will be done.

15 After those days, we gathered our baggage and went up to Jerusalem.

16 Along with us went some disciples from Caesarea, who brought with them Mnason of Cypress, an early disciple, whose house we would stay at.

17 When we reached Jerusalem, the brethren there greeted us gladly.

18 The next day, Paul and we went in to see James. The church elders of Jerusalem were there as well.

19 When Paul had greeted them, he related what wonderful things God had been doing among the Gentiles through his ministry.

20 When they heard it, they glorified the Lord. Then they said: You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews here in Jerusalem are believers--and all of *them* are zealous for the Torah.

21 But a false rumor has circulated about you, claiming you've been telling the Jews living with the Gentiles abroad that they should abandon their Torah observance, and cease circumcising their children and keeping Jewish traditions.

22 [Now we know that this is untrue, but you've never been popular with many people here, so] what can we do? Eventually, everyone will know you're here [and

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.
 23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow⁷ on them;
 24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.⁸
 25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing,⁹ save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.
 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.
 27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,
 28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks¹⁰ also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.
 29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)
 30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.
 31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.
 32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.
 33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.
 34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.¹¹
 35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.
 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.
 37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?
 38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest and uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?¹²
 39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.
 40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on

trouble may follow].
 23 So we have an idea, and suggest you do this: We have four men here who are under [Nazirite] vows.
 24 Take them, and sanctify yourself with them, and cover the costs for their ritual sacrifices. Shave your head along with them, and then everyone will know that the rumors they've heard about you are untrue, and that you are still a Torah observant Jew.
 25 Now as concerns the Gentile believers, we've already written and concluded that they are not required to convert to full Judaism themselves, but they must only keep from participating in rituals involving sacrifices to other gods, from murder, from meat with the blood in it, and from sexual sin.
 26 So Paul agreed and joined the men, the next day sanctifying himself with them, and going into the Temple to give notice as to when the ritual sacrifices [for the Nazirite vow] should be made to complete their purification.
 27 When the seven days of this were almost over, some Jews from Turkey recognized Paul in the Temple courts, then stirred up the people and laid hands on him,
 28 Shouting out: Men of Israel, help! This is the heretic who denounces observant Jews everywhere, and tries to convince people to forsake the Torah and the Place! He's also the one who brought [uncircumcised] Greeks into the Temple, and profaned the Holy Place!
 29 They said this because they had earlier seen him in the city accompanied by Trophimus, who was from Ephesus. So they assumed Paul had brought him into the Temple.
 30 And all the city was stirred [fearing the wrath of God upon the nation for such a defilement of the Temple], and they threw Paul out of the Temple courts and shut the gates behind him.
 31 Now as they went about to kill Paul, word reached the chief officer of the Roman garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.
 32 The man immediately took some centurions and their squads, and ran for the Temple [next to their fortress]. When the mob saw the chief officer and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.
 33 Then the commanding officer came up and took him, ordering him to be bound [hand and foot] with two chains. After that, he demanded to know who he was and what he had done.
 34 The crowd spoke all at once, with some saying one thing, and others another; and when he could not figure out the problem from the commotion, the officer commanded Paul to be taken next door to the Fortress Antonia.
 35 When they reached the stairs, the soldiers actually had to carry Paul upon their shoulders, for the crowds were whipped into a fever pitch, ready to kill.
 36 The crowd, meanwhile, followed after, mobbing them and crying out: Away with him!
 37 As Paul was about to be led into the fortress, he shouted to the officer in Greek, saying: *May I speak to you?* Surprised, the officer replied: *You can speak Greek?!*
 38 *Are you that fellow they called "the Egyptian," who caused a revolt among the people, and led four thousand murdering insurrectionists out in the desert?!*

the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

39 But Paul said: *No--I am a Jew and citizen of Tarsus, an important and well-known city of Cilicia. I beg you--let me speak to the people [and calm them down]!*
40 When he agreed, Paul stood upon the stairs and gestured for the people to be silent. When they calmed down, he spoke to them in classical Hebrew.

1. A debate exists amongst theologians whether Paul was out of the will of God in going to Jerusalem. Some feel he was being headstrong, while others believe that God was merely warning him about what was to come as he followed His will. Personally, the language of the text, and the fact that God repeatedly warns him, suggests to me that Paul was indeed being headstrong and was out of God's perfect will, but within His permissive will in returning to Jerusalem.
2. This is presumably Philip, the deacon of Acts 6:3, and the reference to "**the Seven**" probably relates to the seven appointed deacons therein. Interestingly, Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus claimed in the 2nd century that this Philip was the apostle, and that two of his virgin daughters were buried with him at Hieropolis, while a third was buried at Ephesus. In fragments from the *Dialogue of Caius* a few decades later, however, the assertion is made that the deacon Philip and his four daughters were *all* buried at Hieropolis.
3. Sometimes used to claim that Agabus, although a true prophet, didn't quite get it right since technically the Romans are the ones who bind Paul. That assertion is incorrect since the prophecy is perfectly true in the sense in which it is made, for Paul is indeed taken and abused by the Jews who desire to kill him, a result of which is that he does wind up bound in Roman hands.
4. Not talking about horse-drawn carriages, but referring to the group's baggage.
5. Keep in mind this is almost 30 years after the Crucifixion, and we see the Jewish believers at Jerusalem are still 100% Torah-observant and zealous for the Torah, yet affirm the Gentiles need not be!
6. We now see one of the key points of Scripture that has been misunderstood by Christianity. Note specifically that James is repeating the criticism that Paul is accused of telling *the Jews* (rather than the Gentiles) not to keep the Torah!
7. A Nazirite vow.
8. We now have a choice on what to believe James is saying, and these are the options:

James is telling Paul to lie, and pass himself off as an observant Jew when he knows that Paul is actually living a non-observant lifestyle.

James knows that Paul himself is still a kosher Jew, but that Paul's exempting the Gentiles from keeping the Torah has been misrepresented as a repudiation of the Torah for *both* Jews and Gentiles. Paul should thus show he is still fully observant, and that he affirms the Torah still applies to Jews.

Many in Christianity believe that option 1 is correct: Paul had concluded that no one need keep the Torah, but that James, in order to keep peace, wants him to pretend to be observant. The truth, of course, is that there was a system whereby the Jewish believers retained their cultural and religious identity by remaining Torah-observant, and the Gentiles were granted exemption from this because there was no good need for them to do likewise. See *What You Never Knew About the New Testament's View of the Law* for more information.

9. James very clearly confirms the Gentiles are exempted from '**walking orderly and keeping the Law**' as Paul is confirmed to be doing in verse 24, and reaffirms the decision of Acts 15 that they need only observe a handful of "**necessary things**." Keep in mind this is almost 10 years after the council of Acts 15, which is a direct refutation of the doctrine advanced by some Messianic extremists who teach that God meant for the Gentiles to become fully observant, and integrate with Judaism.
10. Although untrue, the charge that Paul had brought uncircumcised Greeks into the Temple would, and did, arouse the anger of the populace, for such an act violated the Torah and could bring the wrath of God down upon the Jews as a people, even though they were innocent, as chronicled in some Old Testament examples such as David's numbering the people.
11. The Fortress Antonia, which abutted the Temple. Bear in mind the Prefect/Procurator didn't normally reside in Jerusalem, and so this officer is the Roman in charge of the city at this time.
12. "**The Egyptian**" was a false prophet from the mid-50s AD who gathered a following of 4,000 men to assault Jerusalem. Felix' army defeated him on the Mount of Olives, and most of his followers were slain during their attempted re-enactment of the attack on Jericho. (This false prophet claimed that the walls of Jerusalem would fall.) The Egyptian himself is thought to have escaped the carnage, not to be heard from again, although he may have been killed in the fight. This is why the Lysias asks Paul if he could be that man.

ACTS CHAPTER 22

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.
2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)
3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel¹, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.
4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.
5 As also the high priest² doth bear me witness, and

ACTS CHAPTER 22

1 *Men, brethren, and elders of Israel, hear the defense I would now make for myself!*
2 Now when they heard him speaking in the true Hebrew tongue, they quieted down all the more. So he went on.
3 *I am truly a Jewish man born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, yet brought up here in Jerusalem as one of the pupils of Gamaliel [in the yeshiva of Hillel]. I was taught all our rich traditions of how to keep the Torah, and was zealous before God, as you all are today.*
4 *And I persecuted the followers of "the Way," even to death, binding and casting into dungeons both men and women,*
5 *As the High Priest will agree, along with all the*

all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not³ the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.⁴

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death,⁶ and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.⁷

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,⁸

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said

members of the [city] Sanhedrin, from whom I received letters to the brethren appointing me an Inquisitor, and authorizing me to capture all the Christians in Damascus, and bring them back in chains to Jerusalem for punishment.

6 Now as I was traveling there and neared Damascus around noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone round about me.

7 And I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to me: "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

8 And I answered the voice, "Who are you, Sir?" And he said back, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting!"

9 Now my traveling companions indeed saw the light, and were afraid, but they didn't understand the voice of him who spoke to me.

10 And I asked: "What shall I do, Lord?" And the Lord said to me, "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there you will be told of all the things you are appointed to do."

11 I was blinded by the glorious light I saw, and had to be led by the hand into Damascus by those accompanying me.

12 Now in Damascus lived a devout man, fully observant in the Torah, named Ananias. He had a good reputation among all the Jews in the city,

13 And he came to me. Then, standing before me, he said, "Brother Saul, receive your sight!" And right then, I could see, and looked upon him.

14 And Ananias told me, "The God of our ancestors has chosen to reveal His will to you, and that you should see the Just One, and hear him speak to you.

15 "For you will testify to all men about what you have seen and heard.

16 "So why wait? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling upon the Name of the Lord."

17 Now later, when I was praying at the Temple here in Jerusalem, I fell into a trance.

18 And I had a vision of Jesus appearing to me, and saying: "Hurry! Get out of Jerusalem now, for they will not accept the testimony you have about me."

19 And I said, "Lord, they all know how I imprisoned and beat, in every synagogue, those who believe in you.

20 "And when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I was standing by, and cast my vote for his death. I even watched the clothing of those who stoned him!"

21 But he said, "Go! For I will send you far away, to the Gentiles."

22 Now the crowd [—many of whom were ardent followers of the teachings and traditions of Shammai—] listened intently up until the point they heard the word "Gentiles."

Then they exploded in rage, saying: May the earth be rid of this man! He does not deserve to live!

23 And they shouted, cast off their cloaks, and threw dust in the air [to show their outrage and rejection of the message they heard].

24 The commanding officer then ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress and interrogated with the lash to find out why the crowd had just exploded against him.

25 But as they stretched him out with leather thongs [between two whipping posts], Paul spoke to the centurion who stood by, asking: Is it in keeping with the law of

unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard that, he went, and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.⁹

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council¹⁰ to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Caesar to whip a Roman citizen who has had neither trial nor conviction?

26 When the centurion heard that, he went, and told the commanding officer: Be careful what you do--this man is a *Civis Romanus*!

27 Then the man came to Paul, and asked: Is it true that you hold a rank of *Civis Romanus*? And Paul said: Yes!

28 The commanding officer then said: I paid a lot [--five hundred drachmas--] for that privilege and the freedoms that come with it! But Paul's response was: I was *born* a free Roman citizen!

29 Then those who were about to interrogate him stood back from Paul. The commanding officer was afraid as well, for he had ordered a Roman citizen to be bound [and mistreated] without trial.

30 The next day, because he still needed to know why the Jews were in such an uproar, he released Paul from his bonds, and ordered the chief Sadducee priests and their Sanhedrin to appear before him. Then he had Paul brought down and set before them.

1. Recall that Gamaliel is the grandson of Hillel, and president of the full Sanhedrin.

2. Paul must be referring to Caiaphas, who, though not the High Priest at this point, was still around and well known to the Jews. Ex-High Priests were still considered to hold the title for life because the Torah required them to serve for life, although the Romans (and then the Herods after 49 AD) appointed the High Priest according to whomever paid the best bribe.

3. "**Heard not**" should be understood as: "**Understood not**" (John 12:29).

4. This verse is used by those who teach that baptism literally washes away sin, and thus is necessary for salvation. Were this a stand-alone verse that doctrine might be true, but further clarification from Paul's other writings show that baptism cannot possibly be the vehicle which cleanses one from sin. (Only faith does.) There has always been a debate amongst the rabbis whether baptism did, or did not, wash away sins, and Ananias may even have believed this was so and made this statement based on his belief, but the statement is invalid as doctrine based, as mentioned, on subsequent theological statements by Paul. It is akin to some of Job's or his friends' musings in the Scriptures, which may be a correct record of their words, but which are not meant to be taken as wholly accurate theology. We otherwise could view the latter part of his sentence, rather than the former part, as confirming it is *faith* that cleanses from sin, when Ananias says to "**call on the name of the Lord.**"

5. A problematic verse for some who chafe at the thought of someone's being "slain in the Spirit" or else somehow not fully under self-control.

6. Paul is probably being literal, and referring to having formally voted in a meeting of the Sanhedrin to execute Stephen, which means he was a member of this body.

7. If there was ever proof that the face of opposition to Christ and the Gospel are the followers of Shammai--this is it! Notice that the hostile crowd listened patiently to Paul's message about Christ until the mention of Gentiles--then they exploded in rage. This is exactly the attitude that the Shammaites held toward Gentiles, and shows the influence of Shammai in this period of Jewish history. The followers of Hillel would have had no such reaction to the thought of reaching out to Gentiles.

8. Eastern customs showing absolute rage and renunciation of false religious teachings.

9. It was a death sentence for an officer to abuse a Roman citizen who had not had a trial. Curiously, many have been puzzled as to the means by which Paul was a Roman citizen. The simple answer is that Tarsus had supported Julius Caesar* in his rise to power, and many of its people had been granted the rights of citizenship for that support. Paul, who was obviously from a well-to-do family, was undoubtedly a descendant of those who had earned this privilege. Citizenship could also be granted if a family had dwelt in Tarsus for at least four generations; or it could be purchased for 500 drachmas.

* Tarsus, it should be noted, was nicknamed *Juliopolis*.

10. "**Their council**" appears to refer to the Sadducee Sanhedrin that ran the city, not the Great Sanhedrin headed by Gamaliel.

ACTS CHAPTER 23

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2 And the high priest Ananias¹ commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall²: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

ACTS CHAPTER 23

1 Then Paul, fixing his gaze upon the Sanhedrin, said: Men and brethren, I have lived with a clear conscience before God up to today--

2 That was as far as he got before the current High Priest, Ananias, commanded those standing by Paul to hit him on the mouth.

3 Then Paul told him: And God will smite *you*, you hypocrite! You dare sit to judge me, in accordance with the Torah, yet command me to be struck in contradiction to it?!

4 Those standing by Paul said: Do you curse God's High Priest?!

5 Immediately Paul responded: Brothers, I did not know

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee:³ of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him,⁴ and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

he was the current High Priest, for it is written: **Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.**

6 But when Paul noted that part of the assembly were Sadducees, and another part Pharisees, he cried out: Men and brethren, I was--and continue to be--a Pharisee, taught everything I know *by* Pharisees. I am being persecuted simply because I refuse to deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead [which these *Sadducees* will go to any lengths to silence]!

7 When he said this, the animosities between both groups manifested, and they began arguing with each other.

8 You see, the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, nor are there angels, nor does man have an immortal soul--but the Pharisees believe these things.

9 And a great cry arose, and the Pharisee Torah teachers rose up and grabbed Paul from one side, arguing with the Sadducees, and saying: We find no evil in this man. But if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not risk fighting against God!

10 The other side was just as angry, and when things got so hot that the commanding officer thought Paul would be pulled in half like a wishbone by both groups, he ordered some troops to forcibly remove him from the crowd and escort him to the safety of the fortress.

11 That night, the Lord appeared next to Paul, and said: Cheer up, Paul! For as you have testified of me here in Jerusalem, you must also testify of me in Rome.

12 Now when day came some Judeans banded together and bound themselves under a curse if they touched food or drink before they had killed Paul.

13 Over forty men were involved in this plot.

14 So they came to the chief priests and elders, telling them: We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will not eat or drink until Paul lies dead at our hands!

15 So do this: Have the Sanhedrin send word to the chief Roman officer to bring Paul here tomorrow for some questioning. We'll see to it he never makes it here alive!

16 Word of this plot reached the son of Paul's sister, and he rushed to the fortress to let Paul know.

16 [*Alternate reading*]: The son of Paul's sister happened to overhear word of this plot, and he rushed to the fortress to let Paul know.

17 Paul then called a centurion over to him, saying: Bring this young man to your commander--he has something he needs to tell him.

18 So the centurion took him to his commander, and reported: Paul the prisoner summoned me, and said to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.

19 Then the commander took the boy by the hand and led him out of earshot, asking: What is it you have to tell me?

20 The nephew replied: The Judeans have agreed to send word to you to bring Paul to the Sanhedrin tomorrow under a pretext of questioning him.

21 But don't do it! For a band of over forty men will be lying in wait to ambush him, and they've made a vow that they won't eat or drink until they've killed him. Their plans are ready even now, and they're only waiting for you to agree to bring Paul to them.

22 So the commanding officer let the young man go, telling him: Don't let anyone know you told me these things!

23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;
 24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.⁵
 25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:
 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.
 27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.
 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:
 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.
 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.
 31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.
 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:
 33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.
 34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia;
 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

23 Then he summoned two centurions, and told them: Assemble two centuries of troops to march to Caesarea. I want seventy mounted troops, and two hundred spearmen to go as well. They will depart three hours after dusk!
 24 Include horses for that man Paul as well, and get him to governor Felix safely!
 25 After this, he sat down and wrote the following letter:
 26 *Claudius Lysias sends greetings to the most excellent governor Felix.*
 27 *The prisoner I send to you was rescued from the Judeans, who seized and wanted to kill him. Having understood he was a Roman citizen, I came with some troops, and rescued him.*
 28 *When I sought to investigate the matter they had against him, I brought him to their local Sanhedrin.*
 29 *I get the impression their problems with him are of a religious nature, and nothing against our law that renders him worthy of death or prison.*
 30 *When word reached me that the Judeans had a band lying in wait to kill him, I sent him to you immediately, and informed his accusers that they should make any accusation against him in your presence. Farewell.*
 31 Then the soldiers, as commanded, took Paul by night to Antipatris.
 32 The next day, the foot soldiers returned to the fortress, leaving him in the care of the seventy mounted cavalry.
 33 When they reached Caesarea, they handed Paul and the dispatch over to the governor.
 34 After he had read the dispatch, the governor asked from what province Paul was from, and Paul answered: Cilicia [in southeast Turkey]. When he heard that, the governor said:
 35 I will hear your case, then, when your accusers come here. And he commanded Paul to be kept in Herod's old judgment hall.

1. A particularly bad priest the Talmud claims stole Temple offerings for his own use.
2. A term for a hypocrite who looks pious from the outside, but is wretched on the inside.
3. Grammatically, Paul is affirming that he *continues to be a Pharisee*, not that he had *once* been one. "**Son of**" should be understood not as referring to Paul's father being a Pharisee (which he probably was), but that Paul was a disciple of Pharisaic teaching. The word translated as "**Pharisee**" is plural (**Pharisees**).
4. Once again, in contrast to the unbiblical doctrines of some teachers who deny it is possible for Jesus Christ to appear on the earth before the 2nd Coming, here we see from the Scripture that Jesus appeared to Paul in prison.
5. Praefect of Judea from 52-60 AD.

ACTS CHAPTER 24

1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.
 2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,
 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.
 4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.
 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

ACTS CHAPTER 24

1 After five days, the High Priest Ananias came down with [his Sanhedrin], and also brought along a skilled speaker named Tertullus, who made their case against Paul to the governor.
 2 When Paul was summoned forth, Tertullus began his accusations against Paul by flattering the governor, saying: Since under your skilled rule we have had peace in the nation, and been blessed with many good reforms on your part,
 3 We all, in every region, accept and appreciate your goodness to us, most noble Felix.
 4 But so that I impose upon as little of your precious time as possible, I beg your patience to briefly state our concerns.
 5 We have found this man to be a persistent plague! Everywhere he goes, he stirs up sedition amongst the Jews--and furthermore, he is one of the chief ringleaders of the sect of the Nazarenes!

6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.
 7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,
 8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.
 9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.
 10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:¹
 11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.
 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:
 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.
 14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:
 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.
 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.
 17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.
 18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.
 19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.
 20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,
 21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.
 22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way², he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.
 23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.
 24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.
 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.
 26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him:

6 He also came and profaned the Temple; and we took him, and would have judged him by our own laws.
 7 But the chief officer Lysias came and, using extreme force, took him from us,
 8 Commanding us, his accusers, to present our case to you, so you could make the determination of the facts regarding our accusations of him.
 9 The Judeans present then mouthed their agreement with Tertullus' statement.
 10 Finally the governor beckoned for Paul to speak. He replied: Since I know you have been in authority over the region for a number of years [and already have knowledge of some of the issues I will relate], I am relieved to be able to present my case to you.
 11 So that you have a clear understanding of the background of all this, know that I arrived twelve days ago to come worship in Jerusalem.
 12 And my accusers did not, at any time, find me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor causing any disturbances amongst the people, in the synagogues, nor in the city itself.
 13 Neither can they offer one iota of evidence for the accusations they have made against me.
 14 But I do admit this to you: I am indeed a member of "the Way," which they dub a heretical movement, and--in accord with its precepts--I worship the God of my ancestors, believing all the things written in the Torah and our prophets,
 15 Which give us confidence in God of an upcoming resurrection of the dead, when both just and unjust men shall live again, a doctrine that many of them affirm as well.
 16 Because of this belief, I always strive to live with a clean conscience toward both God and man.
 17 It has been many years since I have been in Jerusalem, and my purpose in coming was to bring alms to my people, and to make sacrificial offerings at the Temple.
 18 But then some Jews from Turkey [--enemies of mine--] found me undergoing ritual purification in the Temple with certainly no crowd around me, nor arguing with anyone.
 19 It's these men who, if there is any charge to be laid against me, ought to be here laying it out.
 20 Otherwise, let these others point out any evidence of some specific crime on my part from when they interrogated me at their Sanhedrin--
 21 Other than my proclamation to them that I'm being questioned about today that, "I am being persecuted simply because I refuse to deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead!"
 22 When Felix heard this--because he already was familiar with the movement of "the Way"--he put off the accusers, saying: When Lysias, the commanding officer, comes down, I will have a more comprehensive understanding of these things concerning you.
 23 So he assigned a centurion to watch Paul and keep him under limited house arrest, instructing him not to forbid any of Paul's acquaintances to aid or meet with his prisoner.
 24 A while later, Felix--after his Jewish wife Drusilla had joined him--sent for Paul, and listened to his doctrines about the faith in Christ.
 25 But as Paul touched on the subjects concerning righteousness, godly living, and the upcoming judgment of God, Felix was afraid and upset, telling him: Go your way for now--when I have more time, I will call for you again.
 26 He also hoped that Paul might bribe him for his freedom,

wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.
27 But after two years³ Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

and this is why he would often send for Paul, and speak with him.
27 After a couple of years of this, Portius Festus took the seat of authority from Felix. And because Felix, on his way out of office, wished to depart on good terms with the Jewish leaders, he left Paul imprisoned.

1. Paul is being polite, and Tertullus hypocritical, for Felix was a thoroughly corrupt judge. Starting as a slave and working his way into the court of Claudius, who appointed him governor, Felix was eventually recalled to Rome by Nero to explain an overly-violent response to a riot between Jews and Gentiles in Caesarea. Josephus notes that the Sadducees sided with Felix against the Jews he slew in the riot, showing some collusion between them and him.

2. "That way" refers to Christianity. Remember that Christianity was originally called *hodos*, or "the Way."

3. This should be 60 AD.

ACTS CHAPTER 25

1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.
2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,
3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.
4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.
5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.
6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.
7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.
8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.
9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews¹ a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?
10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.
11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.
12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.
13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice² came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.
14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:
15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.
16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and

ACTS CHAPTER 25

1 Now when Festus arrived in the province of Judea, he left Caesarea to go up to Jerusalem after three days.
2 There, the High Priest and the Jewish leaders brought up the issue of Paul, and they made a request:
3 The group wished Festus to summon Paul to Jerusalem--but they asked this in order to set up an ambush, and kill him.
4 Festus, however, replied that Paul must be kept at Caesarea, where he would shortly return to.
5 Let those leaders among you who can go, he told them, accompany me and make any charges there, to his face, if he is guilty of some wickedness.
6 Festus stayed in Jerusalem for over ten days before returning to Caesarea. The day afterward, he was ready to hear Paul's case, and took his place in the judgment seat. Then he commanded Paul to be brought forth.
7 When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come from Jerusalem surrounded the apostle, and lodged a list of serious accusations against him, none of which they could prove.
8 Paul, meanwhile, answered for himself, and said: Neither against the Jewish Torah, nor against the Temple, nor against the laws of Caesar am I guilty of any offense.
9 Festus, however, wanted to get in good with the Jewish leaders, so he said to Paul: Would you be willing to go with me to Jerusalem and have me hear and judge the case there?
10 Then Paul answered: I am standing right now before Caesar's judgment seat, where I *should* be judged! So far as the Judeans go, I have done no wrong as you very well know.
11 For if I am a criminal, or have committed any crime worthy of death, I am willing to die. But if I am innocent of these things my accusers say about me, no man should hand me over to them. I therefore [exert my rights as a Roman citizen, and] formally appeal to Caesar himself!
12 Then Festus, after conferring with his advisors, said: So you appeal to Caesar? Fine--to Caesar you will go!
13 Now some time after this, Herod Agrippa II [--who had taken the throne after Herod Antipas died in exile, and Agrippa I was struck dead by God--] visited Caesarea with his [notorious] sister Berenice, to pay their respects to Festus.
14 When they had been guests for a number of days, Festus made mention of Paul's case, saying: There is a certain man left under arrest by the former governor Felix.
15 The elders and chief priests in Jerusalem told me

have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.
 17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.
 18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:
 19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.
 20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.
 21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus,³ I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.
 22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.
 23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.
 24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.
 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.
 26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.
 27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

about him when I was there, and asked me to make a snap judgment against him.
 16 But I told them, "We Romans do not simply hand men over to die before allowing them the opportunity to face their accusers, and give answer to the charges."
 17 Therefore, when they made their way here, I immediately held court the next day, and commanded the man in question to be brought forth.
 18 When he got here and the accusers started speaking, they offered no charges as I thought they would [--sedition, and the like].
 19 Instead, this all seemed to be regarding some sort of local superstitions regarding a man named Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul swore was now alive.
 20 And because I wasn't certain about what all this meant, I asked him if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and be judged there regarding these issues.
 21 But when Paul instead appealed to be judged by the august Nero, I commanded him to be kept safe until I could send him on to Caesar.
 22 Agrippa II then told Festus: I've been wanting to hear this man! And Festus answered: Tomorrow you shall indeed hear him.
 23 The next day, when Agrippa II and Berenice arrived in great pomp and splendor, they entered into the court with the chief military officers and key men of the city. Then, at Festus' command, Paul was brought forth.
 24 Festus said: King Agrippa, and all men present with us, you now see this man, whom the multitudes of Jews both at Jerusalem and here insist should not live any longer.
 25 But when I discovered that he had done nothing worthy of death, and since he had appealed to the august Nero, I determined to send him there.
 26 However, I'm not sure precisely what to write my lord Caesar about him, and so I've brought him here especially to you, King Agrippa, in hope that after we examine him in proper legal form, I may know exactly what to write Caesar about him.
 27 For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner without at least listing the crimes against him.

1. "**The Jews**" should be understood as a reference to the Sadduceean authorities that collaborated with Rome, and wished to remain in good standing with Caesar.
2. "**Bernice**" (Berenice), a beautiful woman, was Agrippa's sister, not his wife, although the pair were supposedly in an incestuous relationship. She was also sister to Drusilla, Felix' wife.
3. Not Augustus Caesar, but a hereditary title appropriated by the Caesars after *the* Augustus' death.

ACTS CHAPTER 26

1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:
 2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:
 3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.
 4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;
 5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

ACTS CHAPTER 26

1 Then Agrippa II said to Paul: You're allowed to speak freely. Paul then extended his hand, and replied:
 2 I am delighted, King Agrippa, to give a response to you today over the things the Judeans have accused me of.
 3 This is especially so, given the fact I know you to be an expert in all the customs and issues of the Jews. I ask only that you would be patient, and hear me out.
 4 The Judeans know well my life history, from my youth in Jerusalem, onward.
 5 If they would admit it, they would tell you that I was brought up as an ultra-Orthodox Jewish Pharisee, the strictest sect of our religion.
 6 I'm here now, being tried over our confidence in the promise God made to our ancestors,

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:
 7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.
 8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?
 9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.
 10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.
 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme;¹ and being exceedingly mean against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.
 12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,
 13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.
 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.
 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.
 16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;
 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,
 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.
 19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:
 20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.
 21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.
 22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:
 23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.
 24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.
 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.
 26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

7 The same promise our twelve tribes devotedly serving God, day and night, expect will come. It's for the sake of my confidence in this promise, King Agrippa, that the Judeans accuse me.
 8 Why should you think it unbelievable that God would raise the dead?
 9 But I admit that I once thought it right to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth,
 10 Which I did in Jerusalem, where I shut many of the righteous up in dungeons, having received authority from the chief priests to do it. And when they were executed, I even cast a voting pebble to affirm their deaths!
 11 And I often punished these people in every synagogue, and tortured them into cursing Jesus. I was so determined to stop them, I even hunted them down in foreign cities.
 12 Thus, I came to make the journey to Damascus, with the authority of, and a commission from, the chief priests.
 13 At noon, O King, I saw on the trail a light from heaven greater than the sun that encompassed me and those who accompanied me.
 14 And when we were all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me in Hebrew, which said, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me? You are only *kicking pointlessly against the ox goad!*"
 15 And I said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."
 16 "But get up, and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this reason: To make you a minister and a witness both of the vision you have seen of me, and other things you I will manifest to you,
 17 "As I deliver you from the people and the Gentiles, to whom I will now send you,
 18 "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the authority of Satan to the authority of God, so they can receive the forgiveness of their sins and obtain an inheritance with all who are sanctified by their faith in me!"
 19 Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.
 20 But I first showed the people of Damascus and Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea--then the Gentiles after this--that they should repent and turn to God, and do things in keeping with true repentance.
 21 This is why the Judeans apprehended me in the Temple, and wished to kill me.
 22 Having obtained God's deliverance, time after time, I continue to this day, testifying to people, great and small, relating none other than what Moses and the prophets foretold:
 23 That the Messiah should suffer, and be the first to rise from the dead. Then he would be a light to both Jews *and* Gentiles.
 24 As Paul was speaking in this way, Festus cried out: Paul--you're crazy! Your overmuch education has made you insane!
 25 But Paul answered: I am not mad, most noble Festus. I speak only the sober truth.
 26 The King, here, understands what I'm talking about. These things are no secret to those who live in this part of the world.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.
 28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.²
 29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.
 30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:
 31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.
 32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

27 King Agrippa, you believe the prophets, don't you? I know you believe them!
 28 Then Agrippa II said [sarcastically] to Paul: You almost persuade me to be a Christian.
 29 And Paul [lifted his chains, and] said: I would to God that not just you, but everyone who hears me today was almost or fully persuaded to become as I--except for these chains.
 30 When Paul said this, the King, the Governor, and Berenice, along with the rest of those sitting there, arose.
 31 When they retired to talk among themselves, they decided: This man has done nothing meriting death or imprisonment.
 32 And Agrippa II concluded to Festus: This man might have been set free, had he not appealed to Caesar.

1. It is important to note that Paul here has basically admitted to torturing Christians to death. At minimum, he has admitted torturing some into blaspheming Christ, and some no doubt resisted to death.

2. This is said sarcastically. Also, the Greek isn't clear, and can actually mean something like, "A little while more, and you'll persuade me to be a Christian."

ACTS CHAPTER 27

1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.
 2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.
 3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.
 4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.
 5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.
 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.
 7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salomone;
 8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.
 9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past,¹ Paul admonished them,
 10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.
 11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.
 12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.
 13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.
 14 But not long after there arose against it a

ACTS CHAPTER 27

1 And when the decision was made that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners into the care of a centurion named Julius, an officer in the Caesarean Band of troops.
 2 Boarding a ship from Adramyttium, we set sail, intending to hug the coast of Turkey. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, also accompanied us.
 3 The next day, we dropped anchor in Sidon, and Julius thoughtfully allowed Paul to venture ashore and refresh himself at the home of some friends.
 4 When we left there, we sailed on the leeward side of Cypress because the winds were against us.
 5 After passing through the waters of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we made it to Myra, a city of Lycia.
 6 There, the centurion found a [huge] Alexandrian [grain] ship bound for Italy, and we transferred to it.
 7 The going was slow for many days, and we fought the winds all the way to Cnidus, though we could not make port. Eventually we found ourselves on the leeward side of Crete, near the port of Salome.
 8 After passing it with great difficulty, we made it to the "Fair Havens," an anchorage near Lasea.
 9 Now after a good bit of time spent there waiting for a favorable wind, sailing was becoming dangerous to risk, it being past *Yom Kippur* in October. Paul thus spoke to those in charge of the ship, saying:
 10 Gentlemen, I believe that to sail now will place this ship, its cargo, and our lives at peril.
 11 Nevertheless, the centurion took the word of the navigator and the owner of the ship over Paul's.
 12 And because the anchorage there was unsheltered, the overall consensus was to not spend the winter there, but to gamble that we could reach Phoenix, a Cretan port exposed only on the southwest and northwest that would make a good place to spend the winter.
 13 When a light southern wind came up, they thought this was their best chance, and sailed off, hugging the coast of Crete, certain they would make it.
 14 But not long after this, a tremendous storm passed over the island. The Greeks call it *Euroclydon* [a Nor'easter].

tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps,² undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sir, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened

15 When the ship was caught up in it with no hope of tacking against it, we let her sail with the wind.

16 Driving hard past the bottom of an island named Clauda, we managed, with great difficulty, to maneuver a boat that hung over the stern onto the deck.

17 Once it was on deck, we ran hawsers around it and passed them under the keel to strengthen the ship [for the hull was twisting and threatening to come apart]. Then the crew, fearing we would be driven onto sand banks, dropped a sea anchor, and let the ship drift.

18 In the face of a tremendous gale the next day, we [were getting desperate, and] they threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

19 The third day, we even threw the spare rigging and equipment overboard.

20 When many days passed in this tempest with not so much as a glimpse of the sun or stars, all hopes of survival left us.

21 But after days without food, Paul rose up and stood amidst the crew, saying: Gentlemen, I told you so! You should have listened to me, and not left Crete only to sail into calamity and loss!

22 But cheer up! For I assure you that not one of you will die, though the ship will not be saved.

23 This night an angel of God, whom I belong to and serve, appeared and stood at my side.

24 He said: Fear not, Paul--you must be taken before Caesar, and God has also agreed to spare the lives of all those sailing with you!

25 Because of this, gentlemen, cheer up--for I believe it shall happen just as God had it told to me,

26 Although we must be shipwrecked on an island.

27 When the fourteenth night came and we were being driven up and down the Sea of Adria, around midnight the crew [thought they heard surf breaking on land].

28 They dropped a sounding line to check the depth, and found a hundred-and-twenty feet of water beneath the keel. Soon they checked again, but this time found only ninety feet.

29 Fearing we were about to run aground, they tossed four anchors from the stern, and prayed to see daylight.

30 Some of the crew lowered the ship's lifeboat into the water on the pretext of hauling out anchors from the bow [to kedge away from the shoals due to our supply of manpower], but their plan was actually to flee.

31 Paul [realized this, and] said to the centurion and his troops: Unless these stay with the ship, you cannot be saved!

32 The troops then cut the lines to the boat and let her fall away.

33 When day neared, Paul begged them all to eat some meat, saying: This is the fourteenth day you have been without food.

34 Therefore, I urge you to eat some meat to gather your strength, for not one hair on your heads will come to harm.

35 After saying this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then, after breaking it, he began to eat.

36 Then they were all encouraged, and also ate some meat.

37 The whole company of the ship were two hundred and seventy-six souls [including the centurion and his

the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

hundred men].

38 When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and cast the grain overboard.

39 When day came and they saw land, they did not recognize where they were, but discovered a small bay with a beach they hoped to ground the ship on.

40 After taking up the stern anchors, they were at the mercy of the sea again, and they lowered the rudders and hoisted the mainsail to the wind, making toward shore.

41 But then they encountered two contrary currents that forced the ship aground, and the bow was stuck on a reef while the stern finally broke off from the waves battering it.

42 The Praetorians, meanwhile, wanted to kill the prisoners, lest any swim away and escape.

43 But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, forbade this, and ordered anyone who could swim to abandon ship and swim for shore.

44 And the others who could not swim grabbed boards and whatever flotsam they could, and jumped into the water, making for shore. And in these ways, everyone escaped to the safety of shore.

1. A reference to the fast of *Yom Kippur*, which occurs in September or October. Roman law forbade sailing in winter from the month of November, hence the reason the captain wishes to sail despite the potential of storms.

2. **"Helps"** is the same word used in 1 Cor. 12:28 as a ministerial gift, which shows us that ministry is one of uplifting and helping the church to stand against the winds of trial.

ACTS CHAPTER 28

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

ACTS CHAPTER 28

1 In time, we found that we had wrecked upon an island called Malta.

2 And the foreign-speaking people were very good to us, for they kindled a fire and sheltered us because of the cold and rain.

3 Now while Paul had gathered some sticks for the fire and was laying them down, a viper crawling away from the fire struck and fastened itself onto his hand.

4 When the foreign-speaking people saw the poisonous viper hanging from his hand, they said amongst themselves: This man must be a murderer, who even though he survived the sea, is not going to be allowed to escape punishment for his crime.

5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and felt fine.

6 The people watched, expecting his arm to swell up or Paul to fall over dead. But after they'd watched him for a long time and saw him doing fine, they changed their minds and decided he must be a god.

7 Now in the same area were lands of the chief citizen of the island whose name was Publius, who received us and extended courtesy to everyone for three days.

8 Now the father of Publius was stricken with fever and dysentery, and Paul went into his chamber, and prayed. Then he laid hands on him, and healed him.

9 After he did this, others on the island with diseases came and were healed too.

10 The people esteemed us with honors, and when we left the area they gave us the provisions we needed.

11 Three months later, we left Malta in an Alexandrian ship that had spent the winter there. She had a figurehead of the twin gods, and was named the *Castor & Pollux*.

12 Reaching Syracuse, we stayed there three days.

13 From there, we tacked about, arriving at Rhegium,

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appiiforum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard:¹ but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.²

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it in spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

and after a day, a south wind came up and blew us to Puteoli,

14 Where we found some brethren and were allowed to spend seven days with them. Then we continued on toward Rome.

15 And in Rome, when the brethren there heard of our approach, they came to meet us as far as the forum of Appius on the Appian way, and the three taverns there. When Paul saw them, he thanked God, and was encouraged.

16 When we finally reached Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to Afranius Burrus, the Praetorian Praefect. Paul, however, was allowed to live under house arrest with a soldier who was chained to him.

17 Now after three days, Paul summoned the Jewish leaders. When they came, he said to them: Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against the people, or against the customs of our ancestors, I was still taken as a prisoner in Jerusalem, and handed over to the Romans.

18 When they examined me, they would have released me, finding no crime worthy of death in my case.

19 But when the Judeans spoke against that, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, though I had no basis to condemn my own people in doing so.

20 This is why I have summoned you, to see and speak with you, because it is for **The hope of Israel** [--the Messiah, and the resurrection--] that I am bound with this chain.

21 And the leaders said: We haven't received any letters from Judaea about you, neither have any of the brethren who have come here from there had anything bad to say about you.

22 But we'd like to hear your opinions, for as regards this sect [who believe in Jesus], we know that people everywhere speak against it.

23 And when they had arranged a convenient day, many Jews came to where he was staying, and Paul preached to them from morning until evening, showing from the books of Moses and the writings of the prophets that Jesus was the Messiah.

24 And some believed what he said, and some did not.

25 And when they could not come to a consensus among themselves, they left with this one last word from Paul: Well did the Holy Spirit speak to our ancestors through the prophet Isaiah,

26 Saying: **Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:**

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and *they* will accept it!

29 After Paul said this, the Jews left, arguing amongst themselves.

30 Paul, meanwhile, lived for two years in his own rented house, and welcomed all who came to him,

31 Preaching the Messianic Kingdom and the things

pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ in all confidence,
with no one forbidding him.

1. The “**Captain of the (Praetorian) Guard**” was Afranius Burrus, the Praetorian Praefect who appears to have treated Paul well, and who also, with the Stoic Seneca, kept Nero on a reasonably benign path. According to Tacitus, Nero did not personally judge cases appealed to him, delegating that to the Praetorian Praefect. Paul’s second judgment, in which he was found guilty and martyred, would have been under Gaius Ofonius Tigelinus, Burrus’ replacement from 62 AD, who was noted as a particularly odious and cruel Sicilian. Tigelinus is portrayed in the old movie *Quo Vadis* if you get a chance to see it.
2. During this time, Paul was allowed to live in a house, although he would have been chained to this soldier (or a cadre of soldiers working in shifts) to prevent his escape. I have always wondered if this member of the Guard could have been the “**thorn in the flesh; a messenger of Satan**” that Paul refers to 2 Cor. 12:7, but that can only be the case if the usual date for the writing of 2 Cor. is in error. The soldier certainly would have been the representative of Nero, and would have heard and reported every word Paul said, while watching every act of his. An apt term for him would indeed be “**the messenger of Satan**.” If Paul had likewise been chained to the centurion keeping watch on him in Caesarea a couple of years earlier, *he* may have been the thorn in the flesh. Otherwise, a more traditional view would be that the thorn was either bad eyesight (unlikely), or else a demonic spirit who constantly stirred up problems for Paul wherever he went through the local authorities, the unbelieving Jews, and the Judaisers who would follow after him to pervert the Gentile believers, which may be the most likely possibility.

Galatians

Galatians was the first or second actual New Testament work, written somewhere around 50 AD, just prior to the council of Acts 15, which forever settled the question as to whether the Gentiles needed to convert to Judaism in order to be saved. It is quite possibly the most important book of the New Testament, laying out in no uncertain terms that any thought of being acceptable to God based on following the commandments not only is anathema to the Christian, but is actually a rejection of Christ! The epistle was written because conservative Jewish Christians had come to central Turkey after Paul, instructing the Gentile believers that they must convert to Judaism to be saved, starting with the act of circumcision.

It is mind-boggling to me that even today there are some who miss the entire point of this work, and substitute everything from the 10 Commandments, to some denominational ordinances, that one must follow in order to be saved. Even some of my brothers in the Messianic movement twist the words of Paul herein to make the claim he was confirming that the Galatians should keep all of Mosaic Law except for the one act of circumcision! But the fact is, the message of Paul remains unchanged to this day: If anyone adds so little as one commandment to faith in order to gain or keep salvation, Christ will “**profit you nothing**”!

Note: Because of the way some have perverted the message of Galatians, the author has found it necessary to over-paraphrase some sections so that Paul’s message cannot be misunderstood.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)
2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:¹
3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,
4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:
5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:
7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.
8 But though we, or an angel from heaven,² preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.
9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.
10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.
11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.
12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 1

1  From: Paul, an apostle not because any group or man gave him this title, but because he was appointed to that office by both Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead;
2 And from all the brethren who are with me, to the churches in the [southern] region of Galatia [--Antioch, Derbe, Iconium, Lystra, Perge, and Pisidian].
3 Grace and peace be to you from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,
4 The one who gave himself for our sins, in accordance with the will of our God and Father, that he might deliver us from this present evil Age.
5 Glory be to him, forever and ever! Amen.
6 It is beyond my comprehension that you are so quickly turning your backs on [God], who called you into the grace of the Messiah, in order to accept a wholly different “Good News” than the one you first knew.
7 And really, it’s not “Good News” at all. But there are some who disturb you, and turn the true “Good News” about the Messiah into a perversion.
8 [Let me say it plainly:] If we--or even an angel from heaven--ever come to you and proclaim a Gospel that differs from the one you first heard from us in any way, let him be accursed!
9 If what we said before wasn’t clear enough, let me say it again: If any man preaches any other Gospel to you other than the one you first heard from us--*let him be accursed!*
10 So whom am I trying to please--men or God? Is it men? Not at all. You see, if I pleased men, I would not be the slave of Christ [for that is the price of compromise].
11 But I assure you, brethren, that the Gospel I originally

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews³ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:
 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.
 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,
 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:
 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.
 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.
 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.
 20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.
 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;
 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:
 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.
 24 And they glorified God in me.

preached to you was of no human origin.

12 For I did not get it from man, nor was I taught it by man. I received my theology by a supernatural revelation sent by Jesus Christ himself!

13 Now you've heard of my past lifestyle, when I was a part of ultra-Orthodox Judaism and beyond comprehension persecuted and laid waste to the church of God back then.

14 And all that time, I devoted myself to the strictest possible form of Judaism--so much so, that there were few Jews I knew who could hold a candle to my zeal, passion, and commitment to following the religious traditions of my ancestors!

15-16 But when it pleased God--who had in mind for me to serve Him from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace--to reveal His son in me so that I could, in turn, preach him to the Gentiles, I made no rush to seek advice from men about it.

17 Nor did I head to Jerusalem to counsel with those who had been apostles before me. Instead, I first went to Arabia [to study and seek God], and only later returned to Damascus.

18 After three years had passed, I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stayed with him for fifteen days [learning all I could from him about Jesus].

19 But at that time, I did not meet with any of the other apostles save for James, the Lord's kinsman.

20 The things I am writing, I affirm before God are absolutely true, and I am not lying to you!

21 Now after this, I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,

22 Though I wasn't known in any of the Christian synagogues in Judea.

23 But they had all heard that, "He who used to persecute us in the past is now preaching the faith he once tore down!"

24 And they esteemed what God was doing in and through me.

1. The "Galatia" Paul refers to were the churches of central and southern Turkey, among which were the cities of Antioch, Derbe, Iconium, Lystra, Perge, and Pisidian, which were visited by Paul and Barnabas during their 1st missionary journey.

2. How apt Paul's words are here, for more than once has a heretical movement arisen as a result of an "angel" commissioning a deceived person. A good example is Joseph Smith and the Mormon church that came about because of the commission Smith received from the "angel" Moroni.

3. Better translated as: "Now you've heard of my past lifestyle in Judaism."

GALATIANS CHAPTER 2

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.
 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.
 3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:¹
 4 And that because of false brethren² unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:
 5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.
 6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:³) for they who seemed to be somewhat in

GALATIANS CHAPTER 2

1 Only after a total of fourteen years did I return to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along too.

2 I made the decision to go there as a result of a personal revelation, to carefully explain the Gospel I was teaching the Gentiles. I did this privately, explaining my teachings of the Gospel to the chief members of the home church to assure that I was not, and had not, been ministering in vain.

3 But note that even when we were in Jerusalem [amongst the heads of the church], no one compelled Titus, being Greek, to be circumcised.

4 And that was despite the fact that the issue was briefly raised by some false brethren who had crept into the church--spies, really--whose only purpose was to see what our freedom in Christ Jesus was, and then try to overturn it and bring us into [religious] bondage.

5 But we never paid even slight attention to their views [--let alone repeat them as arguable secondary issues--] in order that the pure truth of the Gospel would remain in you.

6 Even those who were in leadership there--though to call them "leaders" might be a misnomer, for God esteems no man over another--really had nothing to add to what I was already teaching.

7 On the contrary, they saw and accepted that God had committed

conference added nothing to me:

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;⁴

8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

9 And when James,⁵ Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

12 For before that certain came from James,⁶ he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?⁷

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

the Gospel outreach to the Gentiles to me, just as He had given Peter the outreach to the Jews.

8 For [God] who had wrought spectacular deeds through Peter when he functioned as an apostle seeking to reach Jews, did likewise to me as I reached out to the Gentiles.

9 And when James, Cephas [Peter], and John, who seemed to be the main pillars of the church, came to understand the grace of God that had been given to me, they commissioned Barnabas and me to go to the Gentiles, while they would concentrate on the reaching the Jews.

10 They asked only that we would remember the poor, something I was eager to do anyway.

11 However, when Peter came to Antioch once, I had to criticize him publicly because he was clearly in the wrong.

12 For before some of James' associates came, he had no problem eating at the same table with Gentiles. But as soon as these men arrived, he began acting like an ultra-Orthodox Jew, and separated himself from the Gentiles because he was intimidated by those from the circumcision movement who strictly keep the Torah!

13 Bad as that was, the other Jews in the church followed his example [and re-erected walls of separation between Jews and Gentiles again]. Even Barnabas, who should have known better, started aping their hypocrisy.

14 So when I saw that they were not walking correctly, in accord with the true Gospel, I stood up and rebuked Peter in front of everyone, saying: "If you, being a Jew, live more like a Gentile than a Jew [when our guests aren't around], why are you suddenly setting an example to the Gentiles that they should live like Jews?" [Peter accepted the rebuke, so you see that even this incident showed no acknowledgment of a doctrine that the Gentiles must follow Jewish Law and custom.]

15-16 Now we, who are natural-born Jews, and not Gentile sinners--knowing that a man is not placed in right standing with God by keeping the Torah, but by our faith in Jesus Christ--even we have believed in Jesus Christ so we *can* be justified on the basis of our faith in Christ, rather than by our obeying the commandments in the Torah. For by the deeds of the Torah shall no man ever be placed in right standing with God!

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by faith in Christ, we are still seen to be sinners who are less than perfect, does that mean Christ somehow leads us to sin, or approves of us sinning? God forbid!

18 So then--if I were to return to a system of religious bondage that I had renounced [once I knew it could only result in my condemnation], I leave the status of a man justified in God's eyes, and return to stand in the state of a transgressor. [Therefore, to believe God would lead you into mandatory Torah observance is the same as saying that He would lead you back into the status of a transgressor.]

19 For the Law doomed and slew me [despite my own zealous observance of it]. But it did so in order that, once I realized I was dead through it, I could now also consider *it* dead [so far as my obligations to it were concerned], and by that find *true* life in God [which the Law prevented me from achieving because of my own human weakness].

20 And the life I found, I found by being and remaining crucified with Christ, and yet I live on. But it's not really Paul who lives. The one who lives is Christ in me. And the life I now live, I experience through my faith in the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself [as a sacrifice] for me.

21 Therefore, I do not scorn nor nullify the grace of God offered to me, for if right standing with God actually comes through Torah observance, then the Messiah died needlessly!

1. Paul here is directly contradicting the message of the Judaizers by pointing out that his own fellow worker in the Gospel, Titus, was himself uncircumcised.
2. It is noteworthy that referring to the Judaizers as “**false brethren**” may suggest not that they were sincere people who were sincerely wrong, but that out of their hatred for Gentiles they were consciously seeking to add a burden to them to cause them to give up and drop out of the church, marking these men as ultimately tares with no real saving faith in Christ.
3. It is interesting to see Paul, here in his first letter, making the point that he is as good as anyone else, and that those who preceded him had nothing to teach him. By the time of his last letter, however, his humility is such that he has moved from ‘**as good as anyone else**,’ to ‘**least of the apostles**,’ to finally, ‘**chief among sinners**.’
4. A curious point by Paul if Peter is the head of the church. We see here that Peter was acknowledged as the apostle to the *Jewish* believers, but it is *Paul* who makes the claim of being the chief apostle of the Gentile church.
5. Note that James—not Peter—is named first in the list of pillars of the church.
6. It is here that we see James was part of the problem that Paul had to deal with. Probably raised as a Shammaite, James initially may have been less-than-enthused over Gentiles coming into the church, and may have continued to follow Shammai’s 18 edicts, which forbade the Jews from eating or interacting with Gentiles in most situations. (Even Peter called those edicts “**Lawful**” in Acts 12.) There is little question he had to move from a position of assuming Gentiles must be fully Torah-observant to that they could be accepted by God equally with the Jews, apart from keeping the Torah.
7. A very crucial verse suggesting that Peter himself had given up full observance of the Torah. This is probably not saying that he abandoned observance altogether, but he may have become lax in some of the dietary laws. Paul thus asks why, since Peter has been living a less-than-observant lifestyle, he is now acting as if the Gentiles are unworthy to eat with unless *they* become fully observant.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 3

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

5 He¹ therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.²

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,³ being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every

GALATIANS CHAPTER 3

1 You foolish Galatians—who cast a spell causing you to forget the truth about Jesus Christ being crucified for you, a truth explained to you all so clearly that you could not possibly mistake it?

2 I have only one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit because you were carefully observing Mosaic Law, or because you placed faith in what you heard?

3 Are you really this stupid? Having begun your walk in the Spirit [through faith], do you now expect to perfect that walk by your own fallible human efforts [at Torah observance]?!

4 Have you suffered so much persecution [over your faith] for nothing? At least, I *hope* it’s not for nothing!

5-6 Tell me—does [God], who gives the Holy Spirit and performs miracles among you, do it because you keep the Torah, or because of your hearing and believing, just as Abraham, “*believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness*”?

7 Understand then, that people who approach God on the basis of *faith* [—rather than obedience to Torah—] are the ones who are the children of Abraham!

8 And the Scriptures, foreseeing that God would eventually justify the Gentiles also through faith, was preaching that Gospel message even then when it said: **In thee shall all nations be blessed.** [This meant that by his example of faith, all men would enter into the same blessing that he and his descendants were promised.]

9 So those who approach God through faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 Conversely, those who base their relationship and right standing with God on the works of the Torah are actually cursed! For it is written: **Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them!**

11 The notion that God reckons no man in right standing on the basis of his keeping the Torah is even evident in this verse from Habakkuk: **The just shall live by faith.**

12 You see, the Torah is not faith-based! Remember what it says: *The man that doeth the commandments shall find life in them!*

13 Christ has ransomed us from the curse that comes upon those who fail to keep the Torah by himself *becoming* a curse! For it is written: **Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.**

14 He did this so that the blessing of Abraham might also be given to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, so that we all might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith. [And it is *His* job to aid us in living righteously before God, not our job to perfect that through keeping a list of commandments regulating our lifestyle.]

15 Brethren, I now need to speak in human terms to explain more of

one that hangeth on a tree.⁴
 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
 15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.
 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.⁵
 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.
 18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.⁶
 19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions,⁷ till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.⁸
 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.
 21 Is the law then against the promises of God?⁹ God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.
 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin,¹⁰ that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.
 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.
 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.¹¹
 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

what I mean: Even in the case of *human* men entering into a binding covenant of agreement, neither of them, once its terms are established, can thereafter add to it or take away from it; it stands as written, and cannot be modified.
 16 Now it was to "Abraham and his seed" that the promises in the covenant we're speaking of were made. Note that He didn't say "and to your *seeds*"--referring to many heirs--but to "**thy seed**," which is singular! And that one lone "**seed**" is none other than Christ himself!
 17 And I say that the covenant God confirmed in Christ four hundred and thirty years before Moses and the Law came cannot be overturned and the promise made meaningless. Thus, it only follows that the Torah of Moses [--a secondary covenant to the one God had with Abraham--] cannot overturn the primary covenant that was in force *before* that secondary covenant existed. [Nor can it function as a perpetual covenant, for that would nullify and supersede the original covenant preceding it, which was based on a different platform, namely faith.]
 18 For if the inheritance actually comes through the Torah, it no longer comes through a promise [but instead through being earned]. But we see that God gave a *promise* to Abraham [which meant that it had to be received through *belief*, rather than *earned* through obeying commandments].
 19 All right--so what was the purpose of the Torah then? Well, it was added as a codicil to the primary covenant because the Jewish people were sinful transgressors [incapable of moral living on their own without having their lives regulated like children]. The Torah was thus added to keep watch over them until the one "**seed**" came to whom the promise made to Abraham applied. [After that, the Torah would no longer be necessary to keep men in God's plan and right standing because the *Holy Spirit* would now do that.] There is also one more thing to remember: The Torah was ordained by angels, and delivered to Moses, the mediator between God and the people. [This is wholly inferior to the primary covenant that was instituted one-on-one between God and Abraham!]
 20 When an agreement is made by someone directly, he is not a mediator [--he is the primary signatory to the agreement--] and no mediator was used between God and Abraham [unlike at Mount Sinai, when angels played a role in the giving of the Torah]. So with Abraham, God acted on His own, and made His own direct negotiations with Abraham on a face-to-face basis [without employing anything else as a mediator].
 21 But in saying these things, am I claiming that the Torah is somehow against the promises God made Abraham? God forbid! For if the Torah could have given men true life in God, righteousness would have come *through* the Torah!
 22 But the Scriptures *of* that Torah reveal that even the best of us are shamefaced sinners before God, and this revelation is given so that we can understand that the promise made to Abraham as a result of his faith can only be given to those who believe in Jesus Christ.
 23 But before the source and manifestation of what our faith would be in arrived, we were kept under the Torah and not allowed out from under its umbrella into the source of faith that was yet to be revealed.
 24 Thus, the Law was our tutor to introduce us to Christ so we could ultimately be justified on the basis of faith.
 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under the tutor.
 26 For you are all children of God because of your faith in Christ Jesus.
 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put him on as your covering.
 28 So all are one in Christ Jesus, and thus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female in God's eyes [for all are equal].
 29 And if it so be that you are Christ's, then you are also Abraham's "**seed**" [on an individual basis], and heirs [through Christ] of the promise God made to Abraham.

1. The “**He**” is God. Paul here is pointing out that the power of the Spirit was received by the church after it accepted his doctrines, and long before the group from Judea came to insist the Galatians must also keep the Torah.
2. Paul here is confirming that it is impossible to please God by attempting to keep the Torah, for no human is capable of keeping it to the exacting standard that a perfect God would otherwise require; and to attempt to keep it for the wrong reason is to deny the work of Christ who died to redeem mankind, and to bring oneself under the various curses written into the Torah for those who *fail* to keep it! Paul’s words still hold true today, for there are a host of Christians bringing themselves under some degree of curse by legalistically tithing in obedience to Malachi 3. While the principle of tithing is valid, those who tithe out of a sense that it is a requirement automatically bring themselves under the curse of the Law, because those who tithe, believing it is a point of righteousness, bring themselves under the curse of having to keep the remainder of the Torah as well.
3. Paul is not saying the Torah is an accursed thing, but rather that Christ, by relieving us from the responsibility of keeping the Torah for righteousness’ sake, has redeemed us from the curses contained inside the Law for those who failed to continuously keep it.
4. This is one of the ways Christ took our sin and punishment on Himself while on the cross.
5. In this verse, Paul is pointing out that God intended from the beginning that Jesus Christ would be the focus of all the promises made to Abraham who, in turn, would bequeath those promises to us apart from keeping the ordinances of the Torah that were instituted hundreds of years afterward. By the way, verse 17 obliterates the false doctrine taught by ultra-Orthodox Judaism, and some Messianics, that the full Law existed long before Moses, and was merely written down in Moses’ time. Paul here makes it clear that the Law did not exist until 430 years after the time of Abraham! What *did* exist from the Fall of Man onward were the fundamental moral precepts of God placed in the conscience of man without need of writing them out.
6. Paul continues to show that the promises made to Abraham were based solely on the grace of God through Abraham’s willingness to believe, and not as a reward for obeying commandments, which would make it an earned entitlement.
7. Meaning that since the Hebrews showed themselves to be incapable of moral living on their own, the ordinances of the Torah were given to regulate their behavior, just as rules are made for disobedient children.
8. It was common belief that the Law was given by the angels who heard it from God. The Mediator was, of course, Moses. The superior covenant of Christ permits God Himself, through the Holy Spirit, to enact with mankind directly with Christ as the heavenly Mediator.
9. Having apparently been critical of the Torah in previous verses, Paul briefly pauses to make sure the Galatians understand he is not saying the Law is bad—but that the focus of the promises of God were always based on faith alone; and that no commandment can change the inside of a man, for a greater righteousness than that contained in laws is required for that.
10. In other words, the Scriptures point out that all men are ultimately sinners, and thus all men equally can only appropriate reconciliation to God by faith in the Messiah.
11. “**Schoolmaster**” is a bad translation. The word refers to a faithful slave who tutored a young man and oversaw him as a governess might, until he reached maturity and could function on his own without need of supervision. The point here is that full maturity is achieved through the power of the Spirit acting upon the believer’s heart so that he walks uprightly by a transformed nature, and not because he follows a set of commandments for regulated behavior.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;
 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.
 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:¹
 4 But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,
 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.²
 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.
 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant,³ but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.
 8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.
 9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?
 10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.⁴
 11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.
 12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am;⁵ for I am

GALATIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Now I point out that a man’s heir, when he is a child, is no different from a slave, even though he is due to inherit and become the lord of everything,
 2 For he is under the care of tutors and caregivers who tell him what to do until he reaches the age of maturity that his father sets for him.
 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage to the spiritual forces in this world.
 3 [*Alternate reading*]: Even so, we [Jews], when we were bound to the tutor of the Law, were simply carrying out the carnal ordinances appropriate to life in this age, while waiting for the Messiah to eventually come and lead us from this world and its principles into the next world and *its* principles.
 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born from a woman, and born under the covenant of the Torah,
 5 To redeem those who were under the Torah [by fulfilling its requirements], so that we could move beyond it into full adoptive sonship [and inheritance].
 6 And because you all *are* sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son to live in your hearts, which can now cry out, “Daddy!”
 7 Because of this, you are no longer a slave [under a tutor], but a [grown] son. And since you *are* a son, then you are one of God’s heirs through Christ.
 8 Now before you knew God, you [Gentiles] performed religious duties and obligations [like honoring certain days, making certain sacrifices, and doing certain things] to appease creatures that by nature are not gods, but merely masquerade as gods.
 9 But now, after you know God—or rather, are known by

as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.⁶

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.⁷

18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.⁸

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice;⁹ for I stand in doubt of you.

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law,¹⁰ do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son:¹¹ for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

God--how is it that you return to the same mindset of spiritual bondage that you cast by the wayside when you came to Christ in the first place [by submitting to the tutor I just pointed out we *Jewish* believers are no longer under]?

10 You are [unnecessarily and legalistically] observing [Sabbath] days, Jewish New Moon [Sabbaths], Jewish Festival [Sabbaths], and [even Sabbath] *years*!

11 I am starting to think I wasted my time with you.

12-13 Brothers, I beg you to be as I now am, for I was once as *you* are now. You did me no wrong, and you know that it was as a result of a physical illness that I had the opportunity to stay and preach to you in the beginning.

14 And the physical trial I was undergoing you did not consider or reject me over, but you welcomed me as a messenger from God, and gave me homage as if I were Christ Jesus himself [when you mistakenly thought I and Barnabas were Greek gods]!

15 What has happened to the blessed fellowship we mutually shared, that you once spoke of? Back then, I know you would have plucked out your own eyes to give me if that would have helped me.

16 So am I now your enemy for simply telling you the truth?

17 Those causing these problems zealously seek after you, but in a bad way. They really want to shut you off from me in order to draw followers after themselves for their own glory.

18 Now it's commendable to be zealous for a good cause even when I'm not there [so that's not what I am criticizing].

19 My little children, for whom I am undergoing labor pains yet again to see Christ birthed in you...

20 I wish I were there with you now, and could change my tone, for I am in doubt of what will happen to you.

21 Tell me, you who want to be under the Torah: Do you hear what the [books of the] Torah say?

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: One by a slave woman, and one by a freewoman.

23 But the son from the slave woman was born through the normal procreative processes, while the son from the freewoman came miraculously, through a divine promise.

24 These are an allegory, for they represent the two separate covenants. Hagar, the slave woman, represents the covenant and Torah from Mount Sinai, which is the covenant whose sons are born from bondage.

25 For Hagar, as relates to the Torah, is Mount Sinai, in Arabia. It corresponds to earthly Jerusalem whose children are in religious bondage to this day.

26 But the heavenly Jerusalem above the earth is free, and that is the Jerusalem that is our true mother.

27 For it is written, **Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.**

28 Now we Christians, brethren, are children of promise as Isaac was.

29 But from then to now, the children of the flesh persecute the children of the Spirit.

30 Nevertheless, what did the Scripture say? **Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.**

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the freewoman!

1. We have a bit of a problem understanding verse 4. Paul has been speaking of the Law and the Jews, that's clear. Verse 4 can then logically be rendered as speaking of being under the Law as a tutor, which is how most Bibles see it. But it can also, as in Colossians, refer to demonic influences. However, this is a letter primarily to Gentiles, and from verse 8 on, Paul returns to speaking

to them rather than Jews. Does verse 4 thus refer to Jews, Gentiles, or somehow to both? The paraphrase has two renderings. The alternate may be closest to a normal understanding of the verse, but since both Jew and Gentile are apparently intertwined with the chapter (see verses 8 and 9, which point out Gentiles were following religious observances to demons in comparison to Jews following ordinances of the Law to God) both groups may be included in verse 4. If that's the case, to really paraphrase what Paul is saying and see its relevance to verse 8, we must expand the verse to help define the scope of his point, and to a degree combine both paraphrases of the verse into one: **In like manner, when we Jews were bound to the tutor of the Law, we were simply carrying out the carnal ordinances appropriate to life in this age, while waiting for the Messiah to eventually come and lead us from this world and its principles into the next world and its principles, [while you Gentiles, under your own sort of bondage, had similar practices to various other spiritual forces in the universe].**

2. Paul here is making a distinction between the Jewish view that Israel was the son of God only in a national sense; and the gift of Christ, which provided for adoption by God on an individual basis.

3. As Paul will go on to show, the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of servanthood through which a person was accepted depending on how faithfully he did what was told. The New covenant, which is vastly superior, provides for the former servant to now become adopted as a son and heir, and to be accepted wholly apart from how well he obeys what he is told to do.

4. This is a criticism of the Galatians keeping all forms of the Jewish Sabbath: Sabbath days, months (the Jewish New Moon Sabbath), times (the *Moedim* or "appointed times" of the Jewish Feasts), and apparently even the Sabbath *years*! (There was such a year in AD 48 or 49, around the time this Epistle was written.) Now there is nothing intrinsically wrong with these observances, but the Galatians were keeping these ordinances out of fear they would go to hell if they did *not* keep them. In the case of the Sabbath year, some were probably refusing to work, and looked to the church to support them during that year.

5. This is a rather difficult verse in Greek. Although most Bibles translate it similarly to how the KJV does, it can also be understood as the paraphrase renders it, and it is the author's belief that this fits the context better than, **"Be as I am; for I am as you are."** The Aramaic text also reads similarly.

6. This verse is the basis of the common belief that Paul's **"thorn in the flesh"** was an eye problem.

7. Better paraphrased as: *"Those causing these problems have zealously sought to ensnare you and shut you off from me in order to hear them--but their purpose is to draw followers after themselves for their own glory."*

8. Paul is congratulating them on at least being zealous, although their zeal is misdirected.

9. **"Change my voice"** is better rendered: **"Change my tone."**

10. A very clear, sarcastic tone toward those who think they should keep Mosaic Law.

11. How some of my Messianic brothers can possibly look at this chapter and conclude Paul is saying, *"God wants all believers to keep the Torah, excluding the one act of circumcision,"* is beyond me. The extremist Messianic says: "The Torah is perpetual and all must keep it or they are rejecting God," and Paul's slashing response is: **"Cast out the bondwoman and her son!"** No one is required to keep any positive *mitzvot* of Mosaic Law to follow Christ, and doing so out of a sense of fear is a **"bondage"** that holds the potential of cutting one off from the grace of Christ!

It's this same refusal to accept the words of Paul here that causes some Messianics to teach a heresy that holds where the New Testament refers to a **"New covenant,"** it should actually be translated as a **"renewed covenant."** Well, here we see Paul himself saying there are **"two"** covenants: Not one covenant, which has been improved with new life breathed into it, but a second, independent covenant that took over where the first left off! That first covenant--which Paul says leads to bondage--is the Mosaic covenant, which is now dead.

That covenant is dead because the Jews sinned in the wilderness.

That covenant is dead because the Jews never kept it (Malachi 3:7).

That covenant is dead because the leaders of Judaism crucified their Messiah.

And that covenant is dead because God Himself left the Temple behind to dwell with mankind directly after Messiah's sacrifice.

Now the prophetic mysteries in that covenant will last forever. The moral precepts in that covenant will last forever. But that covenant itself, which was structured on obedience, and made promises based on obedience rather than faith, has been superseded by a **"Better"** covenant as repeatedly stressed in Hebrews.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 5

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.¹

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.²

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

7 Ye did run well; who did hinder³ you that ye should not obey the truth?

8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 5

1 So stand, unmoving, in the liberty Christ freed us to enjoy, and don't get caught up again in a yoke of religious bondage.

2 Look--I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you whatever.

3 For I remind those who have undergone circumcision [--and think they can stop at that--] to know that a man who receives physical circumcision [in the belief he must do that to be in right standing with God] must also keep the rest of Mosaic Law as well!

4 Those of you who now seek justification with God through the Torah have fallen away from grace, and cut yourselves off from Christ in the process!

5 Meanwhile, the rest of us, who live by the Spirit, await the assurance of true righteousness that can come only through faith.

6 You see, for those in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. All that counts is faith operating through love.

7 You were running a good race. Who cut in front of you, causing you to break stride and not obey the truth?

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.
 10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.
 11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision,⁴ why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.
 12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.⁵
 13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh,⁶ but by love serve one another.
 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.
 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.⁷
 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
 20 Idolatry,⁸ witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.⁹
 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.¹⁰
 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.
 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.
 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

8 These ideas did not originate with [God] who called you.
 9 "A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough."
 10 I am confident that you, through the Lord's influence, will return to a correct understanding of the faith, and that he who is making you stumble will reap his judgment, whomever that person is.
 11 Oh, and by the way: If [--as a different set of liars claim--] I still preach circumcision and Torah observance as the way to God, brethren, then why do I suffer continual persecution [at the hands of the unbelieving Jews]? In fact, if I *were* preaching that sort of doctrine, the cross [and notion of a crucified Messiah atoning for sin] would cease to be a stumbling block to them.
 12 I wish those troubling you would pull out their circumcision knives, and emasculate themselves!
 13 For, brethren, you have been called by God into a state of liberty. Just don't use that freedom from religious obligations as a license to commit sin the flesh longs for, but serve one another in love.
 14 For all the Torah is fulfilled in this one command: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**
 15 But if you keep biting and devouring one another--beware, lest you consume each other.
 16 So I say this: Walk in the footsteps of the Spirit, and you will not take the last step of actually committing the lust of your flesh.
 17 For the flesh and the spirit are in opposition to each other, and at constant war with each other--and you are always torn between which urge to follow, and you cannot do the things you really want to do.
 18 But if the Spirit leads you, you are not under the Torah.
 19 Now the things the flesh likes to do are obvious: Adultery, fornication, impurity of various sorts, lasciviousness,
 20 Idolatry, drug abuse, hatred, argumentativeness, jealousy, wrath, strife, rebelliousness, doctrinal heresies,
 21 Envy, murders, drunkenness, partying, and things along these lines which, as I have told you before, if you practice them you will not inherit the Kingdom of God.
 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith,
 23 Meekness, and self-control. There has never been any law, by the way, regulating how often, or in what way, these can be done.
 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its evil desires.
 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.
 26 Let us not desire our own selfish advancement in the community, provoking each other, or envying each other.

1. Paul is referring to the very "yoke" that the Judaiser of then, and the heretic of today, seek to place upon the neck of Gentile believers: observance of the Torah (see verse 3, Matthew 11: 28-30, and Acts 15:7-10).

Despite the attempts of heretics to hold onto Law with one hand, and grace with the other, the Law was--and is--a "yoke of bondage," and not the completion of one's walk with God, nor do more than its basic moral principles have any place in the *Gentile* Christian's life. The reason for this--and the reason why I belabor the point throughout this work--is that while Paul accepted Jews continuing in Torah observance (1 Cor. 7:18 and Romans 14:2), not once did he ever tolerate Gentiles being taught to keep the various Sabbath, cultural or dietary aspects of it (Gal. 4:10, Col. 2:16, 1 Tim.: 3-11). This is because a non-Jew who embraces any of these points of the Law will be moving--not forward, but *backwards* in the faith if he adopts them.

When a man comes to salvation in Christ, he has reached a point of enlightenment that can either grow or wither, depending on the doctrines he embraces from that point. If he is taught that God requires or calls on him to keep various Torah commands, he is now spiritually retreating into the shadows and joining the Jews of Romans 14 who were "**weak in the faith**," rather than walking forward with the ranks of the "**strong**." If he then continues in the lie that Torah observance is a mandated part of the Christian faith, he will move further and further from truth, and the end result will be divisions and heresies along these lines:

1. He will misuse and pervert verses in the New Testament such as Matt 19:17, Rom 2:13, and Rom. 3:31, and use them as "proof" Christians *must* keep the law of Moses to be saved.

2. He will focus more on the Old Testament than the New, and embrace teachings by so-called "Torah-observant" Messianics

that the Law must be kept by every generation. He will consider denial of that position a doctrine of devils.

3. He will stop using the name *Jesus*, and call Him *Yeshua*--not to be more accurate, but as a denunciation and repudiation of "Gentile Christianity and its Gentile Jesus" that should be rejected by the "true" followers of God who keep Torah. He will no longer consider himself a part of the normal Christian community, but instead a part of the Messianic community of believers.

4. He will make a personal choice to reject observances like Easter or Christmas--which, in our society, are in the crosshairs of the Godless, Satan-inspired politicians and judges--but then go beyond that to denounce those who *do* participate in them.

5. He will reject orthodox contemporary or historic Gentile Christian theologians--whom God used mightily to teach and proclaim the Gospel--in favor of unpedigreed modern Messianic teachers attacking traditional Christian biblical interpretation.

He will come to view the Jewish Talmud, and the writings of Christ-rejecting Orthodox rabbis, as more edifying than the writings of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, and so on.

6. He will claim that his particular group is an example of *real* Christianity, and that standard Catholic and Protestant denominations have lost the true teachings of Christ and the apostles, injecting hosts of pagan teachings, holidays, and beliefs in their place. In connection with this, he will adopt an attitude of elitism and pride, considering Christians and denominations that reject Sabbath and Torah observance to be in deception--or, at worst, heretics following Satan and the Antichrist. He may actually come to deny the deity of Christ, and label that a "Catholic" doctrine that must be rejected.

7. He will deny the "**New covenant**," and instead claim a "**Renewed covenant**," which retains Torah observance. He may reject using the term *Old Testament*, considering the Law and the teachings of how to observe it therein to be equally binding on believers with the writings of the New Testament.

8. He will ultimately deny the reliability of the New Testament itself. If confronted about his beliefs with verses that contradict his views, he will insist those verses are mistranslated, misunderstood, or perhaps were added by the Catholic Church.

9. He will claim that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and then go on to accept someone's reconstructed Hebrew-translation New Testament, which will contradict the *Greek* New Testament on key issues and verses, but fit his preconceived notions about the need for Torah observance.

10. If unable to refute a criticism of his beliefs by those using New Testament Scripture, he may reject the writings of Paul altogether, and label him a false prophet. (I've seen Messianics do this more than once, by the way!)

11. He may come to believe that only those who keep the Jewish Law, while acknowledging Christ as Messiah, will enter into eternal life, and everyone else will be damned.

12. He will reach the point where he has "**fallen from grace**" and Christ "**profits him nothing**" when he becomes consciously secure and certain of his salvation because he acknowledges Yeshua as Messiah--and is "keeping the Commandments of God."

All these unpleasant things illustrate the deception it is possible to slip into if, just like the Galatians Paul wrote to, one accepts Christ's redemption, but *then* comes to believe he must also keep the Jewish Torah to be in right standing with God. This is why the Christian church must stand up and denounce those--including some deceived ministers on Christian TV--who are advocating various levels of Torah observance, from Sabbatarianism to keeping the various Jewish Feasts and tithes (typically, as a formula of witchcraft to gain material prosperity from God). To do otherwise is to allow error into the church and "**give place to the devil**."

To be clear, I *am not* saying that we should reject the Old Testament, and need not study it. Rather, I am upholding the Christian precepts that there is a New--not *renewed*--covenant that does not include or mandate Torah observance; and that Christianity must interpret the Old Testament through the New, rather than interpret the New through the Old as the Judaizer teaches.

That is the heresy pervading Messianic Judaism, and what defines a vocal and heretical part of it--but certainly not all of it--as a movement to be avoided and denounced from the pulpit, along with the ministers who support it.

2. Those addressed here were apparently a bit less extreme than some others,* and were stopping short of full observance, but still undergoing circumcision out of fear. Paul here is saying, "No, you can't just stop at circumcision--if you undertake to obey one point of the Torah to be acceptable to God, you must keep the whole of it!" And, once again, Paul in no way, shape, or form voices any encouragement of the idea that every believer *should* keep the Jewish Torah.

* We can surmise this from the fact Paul has already rebuked others in the last chapter who were going further and keeping the Sabbath and Festivals.

3. If there is one thing obvious about Paul, it is that he was a sports nut! The word "**hinder**" refers to someone who cuts in front of someone running in a race.

4. Apparently, the Judaisers were lying to the Galatians and telling them Paul himself approved of their doctrine. Paul points out here that he was still regularly criticized for preaching that the Gentiles need not keep the Law.

5. Better understood as: "*I wish those troubling you would pull out their circumcision knives, and emasculate themselves!*"

6. Having pointed out the Galatians need not keep the whole of Mosaic Law, Paul quickly reminds them this is not a license to break its moral commands.

7. Referring back to the point that the Torah is a tutor, and that one who has come into relationship with Christ, who yields to the Spirit, will naturally fulfill the spirit of the Torah in his behavior, and thus there is no need for his actions to be regulated by written ordinances.

8. This does not mean worshipping Zeus, but rather pride, self-absorption, self-reliance and justification through works.

9. In other words, if the Galatians pursue these sins on an ongoing basis, they will exempt themselves from salvation.

10. Better paraphrased as: "*Regarding these, there has never been a law regulating how often or in what way they can be done.*"

GALATIANS CHAPTER 6

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual¹, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.²

GALATIANS CHAPTER 6

1 Brethren, if a member of the community becomes overtaken by bad choices and sin, you who are spiritual should carefully restore him in an attitude of gentleness, exhibiting no pride or arrogance, lest you open the door to *your own* temptation.

2 Be there to help each other in whatever way you can, and always pick up those who have fallen. In this way, you will

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.
 4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.
 5 For every man shall bear his own burden.³
 6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate⁴ unto him that teacheth in all good things.
 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.
 9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.
 11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.⁵
 12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.
 13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law;⁶ but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.
 14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.⁷
 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.
 16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.
 17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks⁸ of the Lord Jesus.
 18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

fulfill the Torah *Christ* wants you to keep.
 3 For if a man thinks himself better than someone else when he really isn't, he is deceiving himself.
 4 But let every man worry about his own deeds and lifestyle, rather than someone else's, and then he will rejoice in what he has done, neither being jealous of, nor thinking himself better than, the next man.
 5 For every man should live up to his responsibilities.
 6 Let one who is taught the Gospel by someone share every good resource he has with the man who teaches him.
 7 Don't fool yourselves, for God is not mocked. You will reap what you sow!
 8 The man who sows to his sinful flesh will reap spiritual gangrene. But he who sows to the Spirit shall receive everlasting life *from* the Spirit.
 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for at the right time we will reap a harvest of reward if we do not grow tired, and give up.
 10 As the opportunity arises, let us do charitable acts for all people, and especially to those believers in the Christian community.
 11 YOU SEE WHAT LARGE LETTERS I AM WRITING WITH MY OWN HAND [SO YOU KNOW THIS LETTER IS FROM ME PERSONALLY].
 12 [Remember that] all these who are trying to have you circumcised are "Christians" of the sort who take the easy way out, avoiding persecution in their unwillingness to suffer for the cross of Christ.
 13 For these physically circumcised men haven't the slightest idea what it even means to truly keep the Law [in a *spiritually* circumcised manner]! They just show their own self-absorption by seeking to circumcise and make you disciples, that they might boast.
 14 But God forbid I boast in anything other than the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who helped me kill off worldly concerns, and the world's hold over me.
 15 For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision gains one anything. What does gain something is a man who is a new creation from the inside out.
 16 And to as many of you who are willing to accept this statement and live by it, peace and mercy to you, who are the [true] Israel of God.
 17 I don't want to hear any more bad reports about you, for I bear enough pain in my body from the scars earned serving the Lord Jesus [in preaching the Gospel I just reiterated].
 18 Brethren, the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

1. Paul is being somewhat sarcastic with this word, and one could view it as if it was in quotation marks.

2. Paul means that we are to help our brothers who find themselves in need.

3. A different word for "**burden**" is used here, and so Paul is not contradicting himself. In this verse, he means that everyone should take care of his own legitimate responsibilities.

4. "**Communicate**" is better translated as: "**Share**." In other words, those who are taught should support their teacher in a practical manner--i.e., give to your local church.

5. Meaning that the letters themselves on the papyrus were extremely large, suggesting that Paul was far-sighted.

6. Paul probably is not saying that the Judaizers were not observant themselves, but the verse could be paraphrased like this: "*For these physically circumcised men haven't the slightest idea what it even means to truly keep the Law [in a spiritually circumcised manner]! They just show their own self-absorption by seeking to circumcise and make you disciples, that they might boast.*"

7. Better paraphrased as: "*But God forbid I should glory in anything other than the cross of Christ, who helped me kill off worldly concerns, and the world's hold over me.*"

8. The "**marks**" were undoubtedly the scars Paul bore from years of violent persecution for the sake of the Gospel.

Jacob (James)

This epistle was written in the same time frame that Paul wrote Galatians, dating it to the late 40s or early 50s AD. Other than Revelation, the Epistle of James is the most misunderstood book of the New Testament because parts seem to dilute the teachings of Paul. It's for this reason Luther himself wished to drop it from the canon of the New Testament. However, the work is correctly viewed as the other side of a coin. Whereas Paul goes into great detail about how one passes from a state of death to eternal life through faith, James deals with the issue of clarifying what the faith that saves looks like in actual practice.

Since “**justification**” is used by both men, cults universally assume James and Paul are talking about how one achieves salvation because they misunderstand how the word is used in the New Testament. If “**justification**” always refers to being placed in a state of salvation, the New Testament must apparently teach that we are saved by a variety of things: *Speaking the right words* (Matt. 12:37); *by admitting we are sinners, and asking for mercy* (Luke 18:14); *by believing the right things* (Acts 13:39); *by faith* (Gal. 3:24); *by works* (James 2:21); *by the Spirit of God* (1 Cor. 6:11); *by keeping the Law* (Romans 2:13); *by grace* (Romans 3:24), *by God's calling* (Romans 8:30), and so on.

So...are we saved by Words? Mercy? Intellectual belief? Faith? Works? Keeping the Law of Moses? Grace? All of the above?

In the case of Paul and James, both men, though using similar language, are actually speaking of two different levels of justification. Paul breaks it down into the *root* of justification--in the sense of salvation--while James speaks of the *fruit* of justification in one's life. In the end, both men fundamentally believe the same thing. The heresy has been to derive a notion from James' words that God will somehow review one's earthly deeds at the Last Judgment to determine whether or not he has truly been saved. Anyone who believes this is almost certainly disqualified from salvation because what he thinks is faith will ultimately consist of intellectual belief to which denominational works and obedience are then added in an attempt to “prove” the faith is real, or to keep from losing salvation by failing to measure up to a standard he believes God requires.

This is why the cults invariably shipwreck upon James, using it to justify the various works-based salvation concepts abounding in the false denominations, for it draws the spirit of deception from them like a poultice, making their error clear for anyone with a correct understanding of salvation to see and avoid, and reveals the cults for the wolves that they really are.

In contrast, the true Christian understands that any godliness in a believer's life is only the fruit of salvation, and never any sort of measuring rod as to whether he has done well enough to escape damnation. In the end, it's not that a man's deeds are measured to see *if* he is saved, but those deeds *prove* he is saved. In fact, as we get into James' epistle, we will see that where he gets into the notion of being justified by what one does, in both cases he does not speak of a lifetime of deeds and obedience--as the cults insist is necessary to enter into eternal life--but that he instead points to *one single deed*! Thus, our choice is either to believe that the one deed was the ‘work’ God accepted to declare the person righteous; or we can see that the one event was instead the proof that the person had believed in the first place, and the deed they enacted simply arose as the fruit of belief.

This is because faith can exist in two forms: a noun or a verb. Faith that is a noun is simply intellectual knowledge of facts that produces no fruit. Faith that is a verb is the important type. This form of faith produces motivation and actions in the life of the Believer. Most Christians actually have both sorts in operation in their lives in different areas of their beliefs. They must have verb-like

faith in operation to be saved, as James will ultimately show, but on some other topics—for instance, healing, the casting out of demons, prosperity, sanctification, even the love of God for them—their faith might be at best a noun: “Faith” that is either intellectual to start with or else choked off by some sort of doubt, unbelief, disappointments, or failures in the past. They may say things like, “I believe God *can* heal, *but*... He *can* cast out demons, *but*... I *guess* Jesus loves me, *but*...,” and so on. Statements like this, or beliefs questioning or doubting the ability or willingness of God to do or be what He says, automatically make and reveal a person to be one with dead faith. Now you can be saved and have dead faith on all sorts of issues! But the goal of God is that you have living faith in *all* issues, despite the fact that what you see or may have experienced, and the devil’s lying interpretation of those things, may have limited or reduced your faith to, at best, mental acceptance that will produce no good fruit or benefit to you!

Finally, there is a myth floating around that James—whose true name was Jacob—was renamed to James out of deference to King James, whose team assembled the famous King James Version of the Bible. In fact, he was called James in some English versions of the Bible written before the KJV was undertaken, so this belief is not true.

JAMES CHAPTER 1

1 James,¹ a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes² which are scattered abroad, greeting.
2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.
5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth³ is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.
7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.⁴
8 A double minded⁵ man is unstable in all his ways.
9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:
10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.
11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.
12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.⁶
14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust,⁷ and enticed.
15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.
16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.
17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from

JAMES CHAPTER 1

ames, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered outside of the land. Greetings!
2 My brothers, [you should] rejoice when various sorts of troubles suddenly come your way out of nowhere!
3 For know that the faith you stand in during trials will develop determination and constancy in you just as iron hardens into steel!
4 But let the fortitude that comes from perseverance make you into a mature, well-rounded man who lacks nothing.
5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, who gives it to all men generously—without criticism—and he shall receive it.
6 But let him ask in faith, with no uncertainty over whether or not God will answer. For the man whose faith wavers is like a wave of the sea tossed this way and that by the wind.
7 Let a doubter like that not fool himself into thinking he will receive anything at all from the Lord!
8 For a man who wavers between two different opinions without committing to one and sticking to it is a man unstable in everything he does.
9-10 [Moving on,] let the brother who is a poor man rejoice in his exaltation, but the rich man that God has humbled him—because, like flowering grass, he will pass away.
11 For the sun is no sooner risen with its burning heat, than the grass under it is withered away, and the wildflowers lose their petals, and with them their beauty. So also the rich man, in his pursuits, will fade from the scene.
12 Now blessed is the man who perseveres through the various trials of life, for when they are over he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.
13 And let no man say, when he is tempted to sin, “God sent this temptation.” God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt any man to *do* evil.
14 But every man is tempted when his ungodly wants and desires get the better of him.
15 Those ungodly desires lead to committing the various acts of sin, and sin ultimately results in death.
16 Make no mistake, my beloved brethren:
17 Every good and perfect gift is that which is from above, and comes down to us from the Father of the Stars, who [—unlike them—] never turns from light to darkness, for He

above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,⁸ with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.⁹

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.¹⁰

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.¹¹

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit¹² the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

never changes course from what He is.

18 Through His own creative will, He gave us [spiritual] birth through His Message of truth so we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

19 Because of this, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to listen [to exhortation and correction from the Word], slow [to give his own opinion,] and slow to become angry.

20 For human anger does nothing to develop the righteousness of God [in a man's life].

21 Because of this, lay down all the world's various lusts and unrighteousness, and receive--in a spirit of meekness--the engrafted Message [about Christ into your hearts], which enables you to [overcome your fallen nature].

22 But you should be doers of the Message, and not just hearers of it, otherwise you are only fooling yourselves!

23 For a man who hears, but does not do what the Message instructs him to, is like a man who picks up a mirror and looks at his natural face.

24 This sort of man sees his reflection [in the mirror of what the Scriptures reveal about him], forgets what it shows, and does nothing to change his appearance.

25 But whoever stops and looks down into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it without forgetting what he's heard--but instead developing and working out what he's been taught--shall be blessed in that!

26 If any man among your community has an outward appearance of being religious, yet cannot control the words he speaks--well, this man is deceiving himself, and his "religion" is simple vanity.

27 True religion, which is pure and acceptable to God, is this: To see to the needs of the fatherless and the widows when they are in lack; and to keep oneself untainted by the [evil and lusts] of this world.

1. As noted, his true name was Jacob, not James.

2. It is important to note this work is penned solely to Jewish Christians, and not to Gentile believers.

3. "**Wavereth**" is better translated as: "**Doubts**," or better paraphrased as: "*Stops believing what he started to, and considers whether something else may be true.*"

4. This is an unpopular verse with some who oppose the Faith movement, for James makes it clear that faith, or lack of it, determines whether or not a person can receive from God.

5. "**Double minded**" actually means "**twice soulish**," and refers to one who is moved to abandon his beliefs based on the circumstances that he sees.

6. James here is rebuking someone who may fall into sin and then blame God for somehow sending the temptation that he gave into.

7. "**Own lust**" is better understood as: "*His own sinful nature and thoughts.*"

8. The "**lights**" refers to the stars. There were common beliefs in that era that the stars were heavenly beings in a sense, or else had spirit beings in charge of them. Paul seems to indicate (Eph. 6) that some of the spirits in the heavens were among those who joined the devil in his rebellion, and Jesus (Mark 13:25) could imply a similar view. How closely these were identified with actual visible phenomena in the sky we cannot say, but it is possible that a belief was around back then that the fallen angels mentioned in Genesis 6 were some sort of heavenly bodies from the terrestrial universe who left their place there to interact with humans, and were judged for it. (Though traditionally viewed as angels in Genesis 6, the name could have been given to any supernatural creature that the people did not understand.)

Additionally, there was a legend which possibly, if not probably, James refers to here: That some of the stars rebelled on the day of their creation, and refused to take their assigned places in space, being banished as punishment. The Book of Enoch, cited by Jude, offers one view of this legend:

And in the columns of heaven I beheld fires, which descended without number, but neither on high, nor into the deep. Over these fountains also I perceived a place which had neither the firmament of heaven above it, nor the solid ground underneath it; neither was there water above it; nor anything on wing; but the spot was desolate.

And there I beheld seven stars, like great blazing mountains, and like spirits entreating me.

Then the angel said, This place, until the consummation of heaven and earth, will be the prison of the stars, and the host of heaven.

The stars which roll over fire are those which transgressed the commandment of God before their time arrived; for they came not in their proper season. Therefore was He offended with them, and bound them, until the period of the consummation of their crimes in the secret year.

9. Better paraphrased as: "*For human anger does nothing to develop the righteousness of God in a man's life.*"

10. At first glance, there is obviously quite a bit of difference between *Save your souls*, and *Overcome your fallen nature*. As I go on to explain further in the epistle, my view is that James is dealing less with the mechanics of salvation, and more with what proper Christianity entails and looks like, and how his exhortations to his readers to remain pure and steadfast will keep them from the judgment of God that is coming to the earth.

While the words *Save your souls* to a modern evangelical seem obvious they must be talking about salvation, one must remember that James is not writing to Western evangelicals, but rather the Jews of his time. Though using the Greek word *psyche* for “soul,” he is actually thinking in a Jewish context, in which the word *nephesh* is what is in his mind. *Nephesh*, in the Old Testament, can mean physical life or a man’s immortal essence. However, it typically refers to one’s innermost being and conscience—his “mind, will, and emotions” as many modern Christians would state it. Psalm 11:5, for instance: **The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.**

God obviously does not have a soul in the sense of a spirit part of a physical body. But God does have a seat of innermost being from which His thoughts and actions proceed, just as we do. So too, James is speaking of the inner personality of a man, and unless one believes that a person is not in a state of salvation at conversion, but is simply starting a journey to ultimately reach a point of earning or being granted salvation through what he does in his earthly life, James must be talking about behavior that *follows* or *springs out of* salvation. Thus, “**save your souls**” is not really the same as a preacher shouting out to the sinner, “You need to get saved!”; it refers to Christians who have experienced initial salvation but who still need to overcome the flesh and *Work out their salvation with fear and trembling.*

Some other New Testament verses can help bring out his points here more clearly.

James: **Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness...**

Peter: 1st Peter 2:11. **Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;**

Peter is addressing the brethren in Christ. So we see that both he and James affirm that the world’s various temptations war against the soul of the Christian, and the Christian should avoid these. But both men are talking to men who are *already saved*.

James: **...and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.**

Peter: 1st Peter 1:22-23. **Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:**

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Peter expresses a bit more fully what James has said in one brief sentence: That the “**word**” (or decree/command of God) through the Gospel message has the power to save and sanctify both the mortal and immortal parts of a man who receives that message and walks in it. One is, as Peter points out, “**born again**” by what *God* does in us. However, we—through the regenerating power of the Spirit—can purify our “**souls**” (or our inner man) by yielding to the Spirit in perfecting our love and obedience. As Paul says:

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting—Gal. 6:8

So then, when James speaks of the Word of God *saving the soul*, while salvation certainly is included in the statement, the *saving* he is primarily speaking of here is the sort that sees the born-again and already-saved Christian progressively conformed into the image of Christ from the inside out as he yields to the Spirit’s prompting to righteousness.

11. Socrates advised men to carry a mirror and examine themselves every day. If they were good looking, they should consider that an ugly life did not befit good looks. If they were unattractive, they were to bear in mind that handsome actions could offset an unattractive appearance. James may be alluding to that here.

12. “**Visit**” doesn’t mean now what it did then; it means, “*See to the needs of*”

JAMES CHAPTER 2

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come unto your assembly¹ a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place;² and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?³

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

JAMES CHAPTER 2

1 My brethren, don’t let the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Lord of Glory**, be tainted by partiality.

2 If a man with a fancy gold ring and fine clothes visits your synagogue, and a poor man dressed in rags comes as well,

3 And you honor the man in fine clothes, and say to him, “Sit in one of the good seats,” while you say to the poor man, “Stand out of the way,” or “Sit on the floor at my feet”—

4 Aren’t you showing partiality, and becoming judges who make biased decisions?

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Hasn’t God chosen the poor people of the world to be rich in faith, and to be full heirs of the kingdom He has promised to those who love Him?

6 But you have turned your noses up at the poor. Yet isn’t it the rich who oppress you, and drag you before the seats of judges?

7 Isn’t it the rich who blaspheme the honored name of Christ that was invoked upon you [when you believed and were baptized]?

8 If you obey the royal command of the Scripture—**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**—well, then you’re doing excellently.

9 But if you show partiality to one person over another, you commit sin, and are guilty under the Torah as transgressors.

10 For whoever keeps the whole of the Torah, except for one

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.
 10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.⁴
 11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.
 12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.
 13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.⁵
 14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?⁶
 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?
 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.⁷
 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.
 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.⁸
 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
 21 Was not Abraham our father justified⁹ by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?
 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?¹⁰
 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified,¹¹ and not by faith only.¹²
 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?
 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also

small point, has *not* kept the whole of it, but has *broken* it--period!
 11 For He who said, *Do not commit adultery*, also said, *Do not murder*. So if you don't commit adultery, but yet go murder someone--well, you're guilty of transgressing the Torah!
 12 So don't just talk a good talk--walk a good walk, just as those *should* do who will be judged [not by the Torah, but] by the Law of Liberty.
 13 For judgment without mercy will be upon the man who shows no mercy, and mercy triumphs over judgment. [So how would you have it in your case: Judgment or mercy?]
 14 [I now need to discuss a misunderstanding some of you have about faith, and what it really is, for some have what I would say is the wrong sort of faith, and I personally want you to have the right kind of faith: faith that is a *verb* rather than a *noun*! I'll go on to explain what I mean in a moment. First, let me ask something....]
 What good does it do, brethren, if a man says he has faith, yet shows no evidence of it in the way he lives his life? Can that sort of "faith" save him [from the same judgment even the demons know awaits]?
 15 [Here's an example:] If a brother or sister in the community is naked, and without daily food,
 16 And one of you responds by saying to them, "Depart in peace--be warm and filled!" without lifting a finger to help provide the things he needs, what good does that do?
 17 In the same way, faith that is simply intellectual belief that doesn't alter one's way of thinking, nor inspire him to action, is an example of dead faith--faith that is only a noun.
 18 Now someone may say that, "You have faith, and I have works." Well, show me your "faith" with no evidential works, and I'll show mine *with* them!
 19. [Here is what I mean: You might say that you believe in One True God, unlike a pagan polytheist. It's actually a good thing that you have that intellectual comprehension! The *but* to that is demons also have the same intellectual knowledge, but if you want to call that certainty of belief "faith," that noun-like "faith" *they also have* doesn't save *them*; it *terrifies* them!
 20 [O man, you should understand that if your sort of "faith" goes no further than mental knowledge of facts you accept as true, you are actually a brainless man who does not realize your "faith" is not a verb but rather a noun--meaning only intellectual knowledge that doesn't result in behavior and actions consistent with what you say you believe, and thus reveals it to be dead faith, rather than living faith!]
 21 Let me use our father Abraham as an example. Didn't he prove what he claimed to believe by offering his son Isaac on the altar [--and didn't this act prove his faith, and secure his position with God]?
 22 Do you see how his sort of active faith walked hand-in-hand with his deeds, and by his actions his faith achieved its ultimate fullness?
 23 In fact, it was this very act, which God knew would happen, that was the basis of His being able to declare, years before it occurred, that: **Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.** [Thus, the act was the zenith and proof his faith was the sort that is a verb--one that produced actions and became the basis and fulfillment of the declaration God made decades before Isaac was even born!]
 24 So you see that a man's actions help place him in right standing with God, something that mere intellectually-based

“faith”—with no accompanying evidence of it—does not.

1. This is an anti-Semitic translation of the text. “**Assembly**” should be translated “**synagogue**.”
2. It is common practice in Judaism to this day to give those who donate the most money to the synagogue preferential seating near the lectern or next to the ark where the Torah scroll is kept.
3. Better understood as: “**Judges who make biased decisions.**”
4. A doctrine vehemently denied by Judaism, which claims that a person can break one or more of the commandments and yet has still “kept the Torah.” James here is pointing out that if one command of the Torah is broken, then a man has broken the Torah—period.
5. Better translated as: “**Mercy triumphs over judgment.**” This is one reason why even people who think they have committed the Unforgivable Sin can receive forgiveness if they are willing to repent.
6. This verse is universally used by the cults to “prove” that works are required for salvation. However, many theologians believe the verse is better rendered as, “**Can that faith save him?**” rather than “**Can faith save him?**” Beyond that, when James refers to being “**saved**,” he is probably not making a theological point about how to become Born Again, though saving faith certainly accomplishes this. He may actually have in mind the notion of being saved from the wrath of God to come upon the earth (reiterated more strongly in chapter 5), and this would be why Rahab’s faith is cited to show how she obtained deliverance from God’s wrath on Jericho. Her actions, in that instance, did not and could not obtain eternal life for her, for she could no more have been judged worthy of eternal life through hiding the spies than an atheist in Nazi Germany could have earned eternal life by hiding Jews from the SS, no matter how noble an act that would have been. Rather, what she did proved that she actually believed what she claimed to, because such belief required some obvious actions. Her belief thus saved her from dying in judgment with her city just as our faith in a much greater thing (Christ) saves us from judgment, damnation, and the wrath of God to come on the earth. Rahab, meanwhile, then went on to become a true worshipper of God, and through *that* gained eternal life. Having warned the readers about judgment to come, James then goes on not to contradict the notion that a man will be preserved by his faith, nor to ask *if* faith can save a man from damnation, but he outlines the distinction between true faith that produces evidence of salvation, versus an intellectual agreement that lacks the power to actually save one from anything, which is proven by a lack of love, along with committing deeds of unrighteousness and oppression. As already pointed out, *if* James is somehow tying works to eternal life, the examples he gives are not of a lifetime of deeds and obedience, but one single incident that would have earned the individuals in question true justification with God.

* This warning of God’s wrath to come upon the earth is a constant point of most New Testament epistles, to which Habakkuk 2:4 is even appealed to by Paul to show the means of escaping this wrath *is* through faith. Almost universally, Paul’s citation of the verse in Romans 1 is misunderstood as speaking only about imputed righteousness leading to eternal life. While it is certainly true that faith saves the soul and Paul is affirming that, Paul is equally appealing to the verse to show how the same true faith will enable one to escape the wrath to come (as shown by the following verse in Romans). This was part of the same message of Habakkuk.

7. This is not saying we must in any way add good works to our faith in order to be saved. James is saying that if a man’s faith shows no real evidence of it in his lifestyle, then clearly the man has not truly believed. That, or his behavior shows he has rejected the truth he once embraced. Heretics, of course, misapply James’ words and conclude that our works will somehow be factored in by God as a measuring rod as to whether we are saved or not. The natural question that arises from this false doctrine is: *How many good works must we do, or how godly must we live, to be sure of salvation?* The heretic cannot answer the question, of course, and is forced to respond that we must just do the best we can. This is why the person who holds this doctrine is probably headed for a Christless eternity—he has denied the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement and seeks to become “**perfect** (i.e., complete) **in the flesh**.” As Paul states in Galatians, the man who ultimately bases his security in the fact he is doing certain things, lest he be lost, is in a position where Christ will “**profit him nothing.**”
8. This is more of a clarification between true faith and intellectual knowledge. As James points out, bringing to mind an incident in Matt. 8:29, demons might intellectually understand and even verbally confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God—then, in the same breath, affirm that judgment awaits them. Thus, their intellectual assent is not faith and does not save them—it terrifies them!
9. “**Justified**” here has the sense of Abraham, by his deed, proving he had faith in what God had promised to do through the boy. As Hebrews mentions, Abraham proved his belief by his obedience, counting God able to resurrect Isaac if necessary to fulfill His promise through the boy.
10. The point here is not that Abraham had to go out and “do” something in order for his faith to be real faith, or for him to gain God’s approval. Rather, the final goal God had for Abraham’s faith was to get him to a point where he would absolutely believe His word in the face of anything. By commanding him to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham retained his faith that he would still have descendants through the boy despite sacrificing him. By this, according to both John’s Gospel and the book of Hebrews, he received a revelation that God’s own son would die and be resurrected.
11. “**Justified**” does not mean, “Declared by God to be righteous enough to warrant salvation.” It means to prove before God that one believes what he claims to believe.
12. “**Not by faith only**” is not a repudiation of Paul’s revelation of salvation by faith alone, but James throughout the chapter has been dealing with intellectual belief versus true faith. The difference again is between faith that has works as its fruit, and intellectual belief, to which one adds works. Had James written in English, his point would almost certainly have been more clear.

JAMES CHAPTER 3

- 1 My brethren, be not many masters¹, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.
- 2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.
- 3 Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

JAMES CHAPTER 3

- 1 My brethren, not many of you should be teachers, because we teachers will be judged more severely than other people.
- 2 For we are imperfect, and stumble in many ways [and if we teach incorrectly, we cause many others to stumble as well]. If a man never causes offense by anything that comes out of his mouth—well, that man has arrived, and is able to control his whole body.
- 3 Look—we put bits in horses’ mouths to make them obey us,

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.
 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!²
 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.
 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:
 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.
 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.
 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.
 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?
 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.
 13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation³ his works with meekness of wisdom.
 14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.
 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.
 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.
 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

and we can turn their whole bodies in any direction we want them to go.

4 Also ships, though they be a great size and are driven by fierce winds, are turned by a small rudder that goes in the direction that the helmsman turns it.

5 Even so, the tongue is a small organ, yet can do serious damage, just as *a little fire can burn up much wheat*.

6 Yes, of all body parts, the tongue is a fire ready to burn whatever it comes into contact with. It has an unlimited potential for iniquity. The tongue defiles the whole body by placing itself at the disposal of hell, and it's ready to inflame our heart and actions with the fire of hell itself!

7 Every sort of beast on the earth--birds, snakes, and things in the sea--is tamed, and can be tamed by normal human methods.

8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is uncontrollably evil, and filled with deadly poison.

9 It's with the tongue that we bless God, even the Father, in one breath, and then curse men, made in the image of God, with the next.

10 Out of the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. My brothers, it should not be this way.

11 Does a spring flow with sweet and bitter water at the same time?

12 Or can a fig tree bring forth olives, my brethren? Or a thorny vine figs? So no spring flows with salt water and fresh water at the same time.

13 Who among you is a wise man, endowed with knowledge? Then let him show--through his lifestyle--deeds done in meekness and wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter jealousy and contention in your hearts, don't be proud, and don't fool yourself.

15 Anyone who thinks this sort of attitude is acceptable is following the logic and reasoning of mankind and hell [and not that of God and heaven].

16 For where jealousy and strife are, confusion and every evil deed invariably follow.

17 But the wisdom that is from heaven is, first of all, pure. [And a man who walks in it] is peaceful, gentle, willing to put others' good before his own, full of mercy and good deeds, without partiality or prejudice, and without hypocrisy.

18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace through those who are peacemakers.

1. Better translated as: "Teachers."

2. This appears to be a reference to an ancient proverb, attributed to Ben Sira, author of the apocryphal Book of *Ecclesiasticus*, still used by Jews today: *A kindled (small) fire can burn many sheaves*.

3. "Conversation" is more correctly translated as: "Lifestyle."

JAMES CHAPTER 4

1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?
 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.
 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.¹
 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.
 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The

JAMES CHAPTER 4

1 Where do you think arguments and fights among you come from? Don't these come from the selfish nature of your flesh?
 2 You crave something, and don't have it--and you're willing to kill to get it! You fight and struggle for what you don't have, and usually don't even get it; yet you don't have it because you won't ask God for it.
 3 And if you *do* ask God for it and don't get it, the reason is because you asked for it out of a selfish motivation to satisfy your own lust.
 4 You adulterers and adulteresses--do you not know that to be a friend with the [unbelieving] world is to make yourself an enemy of God? Whoever seeks to be thought of as a friend by the [unsaved] world is the enemy of God.

spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?²
 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.
 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.³
 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.
 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.
 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.
 11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.
 12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?
 13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:
 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.
 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.
 16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.
 17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

5 Do you think the Scriptures teach in vain that the [fallen nature] within us drives us to lust, and to envy what others have?
 6 But God gives you all the grace you need to resist these drives in yourself. That's why He tells us in Proverbs, *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*.
 7 So submit yourselves to God, and resist what the devil entices you with--and Satan will run from you!
 8 Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you who sin; and purify your hearts, you doubters [who won't make a commitment and stick to it].
 9 Be afflicted! Mourn and weep [over your deeds]. Let your laughter be turned to grief, and your joy to sorrow.
 10 Get yourself off the throne of your own life, and let the Lord rule there--and He will raise you up [higher than you will ever go on your own].
 11 Brethren, don't speak evil of each other. He who speaks evil of, and condemns his brother, speaks evil of, and condemns the Torah. And if you condemn the Torah, you are not a doer of the Torah but a judge over it.
 12 There is only one Lawgiver whose judgment is right enough to save or condemn. Who are you to take that role to yourself, and judge someone else?
 13 As for you who have the attitude that says, "Today or tomorrow we'll leave for such-and-such a city, stay there for a year, buying and selling, earning profit"--
 14 You have no idea what tomorrow will bring! What is your life but a vapor that appears for a moment and vanishes away?
 15 You should instead say, "*If the Lord wills*, we shall be alive to do this or that."
 16 Otherwise, all you're doing is boasting of what *you* will decide to do, and that sort of rejoicing is evil [and idolatrous].
 17 So then, a man who knows the right thing to do, but chooses not to do it--well, he is guilty of sin [and will reap the reward of sin].

1. An important verse showing that many prayers go unanswered because we ask selfishly.
2. No Scripture says this verbatim, and James is probably saying that it is a theological point of the Scriptures overall. Also, this verse is commonly misunderstood because the "**spirit**" referred to is thought by some to be the Holy Spirit. This is untrue, and the "**spirit**" James refers to what Paul calls "**the flesh**." He is speaking of the sinful nature of man.
3. It is commonly missed by Christians that one resists the devil by submitting to God.

JAMES CHAPTER 5

1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.
 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.
 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.
 4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.
 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.
 6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.
 7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the

JAMES CHAPTER 5

1 Listen up, you rich! Weep and howl for the miseries awaiting you!
 2 Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten.
 3 Your gold and silver are stricken with rust, and that rust will be a witness against you, and will burn up your flesh like fire--this is what you have banked up for you in the last days!
 4 The wages of the workers in your fields who made you your profits--whose wages you cheated them of to line your own pockets--well, both their cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts!
 5 You have lived earthly lives of pleasure and gluttony, and fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.
 6 You have condemned and killed the just, who could not resist you.
 7 Therefore, brothers, you be patient until the Lord returns. Remember the farmer awaits the precious crop he knows is coming, and he has long patience for it until he reaps his [two harvests].

precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.¹

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms².

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.³

16 Confess your faults one to another,⁴ and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.⁵

8 You be patient as well, and don't lose heart, for the coming of the Lord draws near.

9 Don't hold grudges against each other, brethren, lest you be condemned, for the Judge stands at the door [ready to enter his court and pass judgment]!

10 My brethren, remember the prophets who spoke as ambassadors of the Lord. Use them as examples of patience in the face of suffering affliction.

11 Look—we consider those who endure to be happy. You've heard, for example, of the patience of Job, and have seen how the Lord, in the end, rewarded him by showing pity and tender mercy for his own perseverance.

12 But above everything else, my brethren, don't make oaths. Don't swear by heaven, by the earth, or by any other thing [for you don't know what the future holds, and whether you will be able to keep your word]. Just say "Yes" or "No," and leave it at that. Otherwise, you risk condemnation.

13 Is any among you being crushed by ongoing trials or persecution that seem to be more than he can bear? Prayer [is the key to endure or to find the way out]. Is he merry? Then let him play psalms.

14 Is any on his deathbed among you? Let him summon the elders of the assembly, and let them pray for him, rubbing medicinal oil upon him in the name of the Lord.

15 For the prayer prayed with faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And [if the illness has been brought on because of sins he has committed,] his sins will be forgiven.

16 Admit your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. Remember that the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man unleashes great power!

17 Elijah, for instance, was a man who battled the same lust and passion we all do, but he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and the earth didn't see rain for three-and-a-half years.

18 Then he prayed again, and the skies gave rain and the earth gave its harvest.

19 Brethren, know that if any of you backslides from the truth and another turns him back to the faith,

20 Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his ways shall both save that man, and will hide many of his own sins as well.

1. It is remarkable that James says that "above all things" we should not swear (that is, to invoke something like the name of God to "prove" we are telling the truth).

2. The Church of Christ has a doctrine that using musical instruments during worship is forbidden because the New Testament doesn't give leave to do that. Well, their proof is actually right here, because what is translated as "sing psalms" in Greek actually refers to making music on an instrument.

3. James, in verses 14 and 15, is not making a theological point that prayer and anointing with oil accomplishes the forgiveness of sin in the sense of reconciling one to God; he is speaking of this remitting any temporal consequences of sin that may be upon a person. The Gospels are clear that some illness is caused by sin and/or demonic influence, and anointing with oil was often part of the healing process.

Some Catholic teachers have misused these verses to the point they have claimed James was saying, "Call for a priest so that sins may be forgiven." First, no word in either verse can be translated as "priest." Secondly, this epistle was written during the same period Galatians was, and from that epistle, we know the sort of elders James kept company with bore no resemblance to any sort of Catholic priesthood, but were in fact ultra-Orthodox, circumcision-preaching Jewish legalists so strict in their Torah observance that they even seduced Peter away from the true faith—and these were the sorts of elders he had in mind when he says to call for them to pray for the sick!

4. A verse used by the Catholic Church to justify the *Sacrament of Reconciliation* (Confession). The problem is, we see no evidence in Scripture of the sacrament in the form it eventually takes. The 1st century *Didache* also makes no direct allusion to it, although it does say to confess one's sins "in church."

5. Interestingly, the sentence in Greek seems to suggest that the sins covered are those of the person who converts the sinner, not those of the sinner himself! This is very Chassidic in thinking,* and taken in the only positive light available to reconcile this statement with the teachings of Paul, must be a further articulation that the temporal punishments for sin can be set aside by doing

Jacob (James)

good, although the eternal consequences can only be atoned for by Christ's sacrifice. For those really uncomfortable with the apparent doctrine that sins are somehow covered by doing a good work, I should point out that some theologians would indeed hold that the verse means the sinner's transgressions are covered, but that seems to be a somewhat weaker textual position.

* A *Chassid*, for instance, would say that to convert a sinner is a *mitzvah*, or good work, and that because a man has done such a thing God will show mercy to him over his own sins. An Orthodox, conversely, would deny that and hold that one who converted a sinner had done no more than his duty according to Torah, so he should expect no reward for doing what is expected of him.

1st THESSALONIANS

Thessalonica was the free Roman capital of Macedonia, founded in 315 BC, and named for Alexander the Great's sister Thessaloniki. As a point of interest, she was given her name by her father, Philip of Macedon, because he had just won a victory over the Thessalians on the day he heard of her birth. In the time of Paul it was a major seaport of over 60,000 people. Both epistles were written to Gentile believers in the early 50s AD from Corinth during Paul's stay there, and no one knows which was actually written first.

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.¹

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.²

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1 **P**aul, Silas, and Timothy, to the Thessalonian church which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,

3 Ever mindful in the sight of our God and Father of your work of faith--this toil you have undertaken out of love and patience born from your confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4-6 And we see verification, beloved brethren, of your being chosen by God, since our preaching came to you not just in words, but with power and the Holy Spirit, proving that. And, knowing how we behaved ourselves for your sake, you followed our example--and followed the Lord--by receiving the Message, despite the persecution, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

7 Thus, you were examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia [northern and southern Greece].

8 For from you the Message of the Lord was sounded out, not only in Macedonia and Achaia--but everywhere else, people have heard about your faith in God, and we don't need to say a word about you since your reputation precedes you.

9 For they talk about how warm a reception you gave us [and the Message], and how you zealously renounced idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And how earnestly you await the return of His Son from heaven, whom God raised from the dead: Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath of God to come [upon the earth].

1. The last part of the verse should be translated: "In the sight of our God and Father."

2. Verses 4 through 6 are broken up clumsily, and could be paraphrased like this: *And we see verification, beloved brethren, of your being chosen by God, since our preaching came to you not just in words, but with power and the Holy Spirit, proving that. And, knowing how we behaved ourselves for your sake, you followed our example--and followed the Lord--by receiving the Message, despite the persecution, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.*

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi,¹ we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

1 You know, brothers, that our visit with you wasn't made in vain.

2 But even as we had suffered earlier, being beaten in Philippi as you know, we were bold in our God to speak the Gospel of God to you in the face of much contention.

3 For our exhortation to you wasn't born of deceit, improper motives, or trickery.

4 But since God allowed us to be entrusted with the Gospel to proclaim it, we proclaim it boldly, with no compromise in being men-pleasers, but with the intent of

men, but God, which trieth our hearts.
 5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:
 6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.
 7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:
 8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.
 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.
 10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:
 11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,
 12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.
 13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.
 14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews²:
 15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:
 16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles³ that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.
 17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.
 18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.
 19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?
 20 For ye are our glory and joy.

pleasing God only, who tests our hearts [and notes our motives].
 5 For you know that we never relied on flattery, nor did we pretend to be something we aren't in order to profit off you, and God is our witness to that as well!
 6 We also didn't seek to be glorified either by you, or by anyone else, even though as apostles we might have been justified in relying on our offices to exercise a degree of authority over you.
 7 But we were gentle to you as a mother nursing her children while we were there.
 8 Loving you as we did, we were willing to give you not only the Gospel of God, but we would have laid our lives down for you if necessary, because you were that dear to us.
 9 For you remember, brethren, our work and our passion--and how we labored at jobs day and night because we would not take a copper piece off you while we preached the Gospel of God.
 10 You and God are all witnesses to the fact of how we behaved amongst you who believe, conducting ourselves in holiness, fairness, and honor.
 11-12 And you know how we spoke, exhorting, comforting, and instructing you as a father does his children, so you would live in a manner worthy of God, who has called you to His Kingdom and glory.
 13 Another reason we thank God unceasingly for you is because you received the Message of God you heard from us--not as a message from mere men, but as it truly is: the [living] Message of God Himself, which also grows and develops in you who believe.
 14 For you, brethren, followed the example of the Christian synagogues in Judea who are in Christ Jesus, in that you suffered at the hands of your own countrymen just as they have suffered at the hands of the [unbelieving] Jews of Judea,
 15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, along with their own prophets, and have persecuted us as well. They displease God, and are against all humanity [who are not a part of them],
 16 So they forbid us to preach to the Gentiles so *they* can be saved. In doing this, these [unbelieving] Jews are filling the cup up with their sins, and the full wrath of God has come upon them to the uttermost!
 17 But we, brethren, though absent in body for a time, are with you in spirit, and endeavored more passionately to see you again!
 18 We would have come before, and I even tried on my own a couple of times to go there, but Satan hindered us.
 19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Won't it be you in his presence when our Lord Jesus Christ comes?
 20 Yes, *you* are our glory and joy!

1. See Acts 16, where Paul and Silas are beaten in Philippi after casting out a demon.

2. Should be translated as: "**Judeans**," a reference to the Jewish authorities of Judea.

3. We have here a clear reference to the source of what some claim to be anti-Semitism on Paul's part: a direct rebuke to the stiff-necked Judeans, and especially toward Shammaites there who opposed interaction between Jews and Gentiles, and who went so far as to oppose Paul less for his conversion and more for his temerity in reaching out to Gentiles.

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;
 2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

1 That is why, when we simply could not wait any longer to find out how you were doing, Silas and I thought it good to be left behind in Athens alone,

God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?¹

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

2 And we sent Timothy--our brother, a minister of God, and fellow laborer in the Gospel of Christ--whose task was to strengthen and encourage you in the faith,

3 So no one would become disillusioned from the persecution you faced, though you knew that we Christians had to be prepared for such unavoidable trials.

4 Truly, we warned you when we were there that we believers would suffer tribulation, and it came to pass as we said. But I don't have to tell *you* that!

5 It's for this reason, that when I could not wait any longer, I sent Timothy to verify your faith was still strong, lest the Tempter had somehow tempted you [to turn away from the faith you had stood in], and our work would turn out to have been in vain.

6 But Timothy just returned to us with the good news of your strong faith and love, relating that you remember us fondly, always wanting to see us as much as we want to see you.

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted in our own affliction and distress by this news of your faith.

8 These glad tidings rejuvenate us if you keep standing in the Lord.

9 What more thanks could we give God that could adequately express our incredible joy before Him over what you've shown us?

10 We pray day and night with all our strength that we might see you in person, and teach anything left that you need to know.

11 May God our Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our path back to you;

12 And may the Lord Jesus ever increase your love toward each other, and toward all mankind, even as our love for you never ceases to grow.

13 By so doing, he will perfect your hearts in holiness before God our Father, that you will be blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his righteous ones.

1. "Perfect what is lacking in your faith" is better paraphrased as: "Complete your knowledge of the faith." Paul's point was that he had limited time to fully instruct the Thessalonians in the faith before leaving them, and that he wished to more fully indoctrinate them. The statement should not be viewed as suggesting that the Thessalonians were weak in their confidence, and that Paul had to exhort them to have faith in God.

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments¹ we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel² in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter:³ because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Furthermore, brethren, we beg and encourage you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to live uprightly and to please God as we taught you, with ever-increasing devotion and zeal.

2 You remember the instructions we left you at the behest of the Lord Jesus.

3 For the will of God is that you walk in sanctification, abstaining from [every form of] sexual immorality.

4 Every one of you should know how to keep his body in a state of sanctification and honor,

5 And not in sensual lust as do the Gentiles who don't know God.

6 So no man should cheat his brother in any matter because the Lord is the avenger of those who are thus wronged. Remember we spoke, and warned you about this.

7 For God has not called us to live in uncleanness, but holiness.

8 So anyone who rejects this notion is not rejecting man, but is rejecting God who has also given us His Holy Spirit

God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.⁴
 9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.
 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;
 11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;
 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.
 13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.
 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.⁵
 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.
 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel,⁶ and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

[to strengthen us in resisting these temptations].
 9 But as regards brotherly *love*, you don't need me to write about that, for God has taught you how to love one another.
 10 And indeed you show that you love all the brethren in Macedonia. But we implore you, brethren, that your love increase all the more,
 11 And that you master the way of living a quiet life, minding your own business and working at your daily jobs as we exhorted you,
 12 So you will be seen to be honest men to those outside the community, and that you lack nothing.
 13 [One thing, though:] I would not have you to lack understanding, brethren, regarding those of us who have died, so that you sorrow for them in the way non-believers do, who have no hope [for their lost loved ones].
 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then [we can be assured that] God will bring those who are asleep in him now with Jesus at his return.
 15 This message comes directly from the Lord: We who are alive and remain on the earth when he comes will not meet him before those asleep in the grave will.
 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the *shofar* of God sounding. Then the dead in Christ shall rise into the air first.
 17 And those of us who are alive and on earth shall follow behind them and be taken up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the sky, and then we will ever more be with the Lord.
 18 So comfort one another [who mourn for their lost loved ones] with these words.

1. "Commandments" is an overly strong word that is better rendered as: "Instructions."
2. "Vessel," though often referring to a wife, is better translated: "Body."
3. Though the Greek seems to refer to cheating a brother in some way, this may be referring to committing adultery with a married woman.
4. Open sexuality in Greece was about as bad as it is in our own culture, and the strict prohibitions against sexuality that Paul taught were apparently not being fully received by some of the Thessalonians. He therefore points out that anyone who "**despises**" these prohibitions is opposing not Paul's opinion, but God's.
5. Most verses like this are First Class Conditional Sentences that are declarative. In other words, "**if**" is understood as "**since**," or, "For *since* we believe that Jesus died and rose again..."
6. This may refer to the custom of the king's steward shouting out the arrival of the king as he approached. If so, it is either Gabriel or Michael whose voice will be heard throughout the universe proclaiming that Christ comes.

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 5

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.
 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.
 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.
 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.
 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.
 6 Therefore let us not sleep,¹ as do others; but let us watch and be sober.
 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.
 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 5

1 But as to just when this will happen, brethren, you have no need for me to write about that,
 2 For you already know that the Day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.
 3 For when people shall say, "We have nothing to worry about; everything is peaceful and safe"--sudden destruction will come upon them just as a pregnant woman's labor pains. They will not escape when that happens.
 4 But you, brethren, are not living in darkness, that the Day should overtake you like a thief striking with surprise.
 5 You are children of the light and children of the day. None of us is a child of the night or a child of darkness.
 6 Therefore, let us not grow lax, and sleep like others do. Let us watch, and be clear-headed.
 7 For people sleep during the night, and those who get drunk, get drunk in the night.
 8 But let us, who are of the day, be clear-headed, clothing ourselves with the breastplate of faith and love, and wearing our assurance of salvation [from coming judgment] as a

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,
 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.²
 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.
 12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;
 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.
 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.
 15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.
 16 Rejoice evermore.
 17 Pray without ceasing.
 18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.
 19 Quench not the Spirit.
 20 Despise not prophesyings.³
 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.⁴
 23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body⁵ be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.
 25 Brethren, pray for us.
 26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.⁶
 27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.
 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

helmet [protecting our thoughts from fear].
 9 For God has not intended for us to endure His wrath, but to be preserved from it by our Lord Jesus Christ,
 10 Who died for us so, whether we are alive or dead, we can live together with him.
 11 Because of this, comfort and encourage each other, and build each other up as you have been doing.
 12 We also beg you, brethren, to take note of the workers there whom the Lord has set in authority over you, to teach you.
 13 Have great respect for them, and honor them in love for the sake of the work they're doing for you. Also, be at peace with each other.
 14 Finally, we encourage you, brethren: Warn those who are troublemakers. Encourage the depressed. Support the weak. Show patience toward everyone.
 15 See to it that none of you ever repays evil for evil to any man—but always do good, both amongst the fellow members of the community, and to all men outside of it.
 16 Rejoice at all times!
 17 Pray without ceasing.
 18 Whatever happens, stay in an attitude of thanksgiving, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
 19-22 Stop extinguishing the flame of the Spirit by treating flippantly the utterance of prophecy if it arises amongst you, though you should test all prophetic utterances [by the Scriptures] and heed those that are shown to be of God, while rejecting any that appear to be evil.
 23 And may the God of peace sanctify every part of you. I pray to God that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 24 The one who called you is faithful, and will do it!
 25 Brethren, keep us in your prayers.
 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss [from us].
 27 I charge you, brethren, that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.
 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

1. "Let us not sleep" is better paraphrased as: **"Let us not become lax and complacent."**

2. This is yet another verse contradicting the doctrine of "soul sleep." Even those who "sleep" live with Christ. However, it should be noted that some, based on the word *kathuedo*, make the claim this verse means to be spiritually asleep. However, there are more than enough verses, especially in the parable of the Foolish Virgins, to verify the *spiritually* asleep will not dwell with Christ at His return.

3. "**Prophesyings**" means exactly what it seems to: Not "teachings" in a general sense, but the supernatural communication of God spoken through those with a prophetic gift. This is a word of Paul many good denominations totally reject.

4. This verse is frequently preached as if Paul is saying: "Don't do anything someone could possibly mistake as a bad or immoral thing, even if it is innocent." (An example—in the days before cell phones—would be to enter a cocktail lounge to use the phone.) Such teaching often leads to legalism, and what Paul actually means is not clear. Also verses 19-22, in Greek, seem to be one long sentence, and the author believes it therefore retains the same theme, referring to testing prophetic utterances in the church, and calling for rejecting those that do not line up with Scripture, a position Monsignor Knox also took in *his* translation of the text. If not, then it is a general exhortation to avoid evil as most Bibles would render it.

5. The teaching of a 3-part "**spirit, soul and body**" (*trichotomism*) is a Greek notion with no comparable belief in Judaism, which holds only to the notion of the body and spirit of a man.

6. A "**holy kiss**" was a mouth-kiss that the early church quickly limited to those of the same gender. It finally became a cheek-kiss between all Christians, which is how it still exists today in many Orthodox churches.

2nd Thessalonians

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, and Silvanus¹, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1  Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the Thessalonian church, which is in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We are bound to always give thanks to God for you, brethren. And it's only right we do so because your faith grows by leaps and bounds along with the love you have toward each other.

4 And so we boast about you to all the churches of God because of your patience and faith in the face of the persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

5 Which is a sign of God's righteous judgment in counting you worthy to be a part of His Kingdom, for which you're suffering.

6 For it is fitting, in God's view, to repay those who persecute you with tribulation of their own,

7 While you who are persecuted receive God's rest along with us when the Lord Jesus and his mighty angels appear from heaven,

8 Sending down flaming fire of vengeance upon those who do not know God, and refuse to obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction, being banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,

10 When he shall arrive on that day to be glorified in his righteous ones, and to be held in awe by all those who believed and accepted our testimony, including you.

11 To this end, we always pray that our God would count you worthy of this calling and, through your faith and His power, fulfill every good purpose He has in mind for you,

12 So that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, through the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Another name for Silas.

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.¹

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away² first, and that man of sin³ be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.⁴

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?⁵

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.⁶

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

1-2 Now as regards the issue, brethren, of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered up to him, we beg you not to be troubled or worried in your minds over a [revelation], binding doctrine, or supposed letter from us that the Day of Christ is at hand at this time.

3 Don't let any man deceive you in any way, for the Day [of Judgment] will not come before there is first [a total divorce from the truth], and the Torahless Man--the personification of Destruction itself--is revealed,

4 Who opposes every other [pagan] god or thing that is worshipped, exalting himself above them all, so that he treats himself *like* God, sitting [on his throne] in the Temple of God, trying to show that he actually *is* God!

5 Do you remember that I told you about this when I was there with you?

6 You already know what is holding back his appearance until the time arrives when he will be revealed.

7 For the secret ultimate strategy of iniquity is already maneuvering itself into place, but the [Holy Spirit] is holding it back until His restraint is taken away.

8 Then shall the Torahless One be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with one breath from his mouth and destroy at the glorious manifestation of his coming:

9 Even him [--the false messiah--] whose presence will be a reflection of Satan, bolstered with all Satan's power, employing counterfeit signs and deceptive miracles,

10 Using all the lies those perishing want to believe, of

the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie⁷:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word,⁸ or our epistle.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

completely deceiving the unbelieving people of the earth because they did not love and receive the truth that would save them.

11 Thus, God will allow them to fall into complete deception, and believe the lie,

12 So that these who took pleasure in unrighteousness, instead of believing the truth, will be utterly damned!

13 But we are always giving thanks for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God--from the beginning of time--has chosen you to be saved by sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth.

14 Thus, he called you through our preaching the Gospel to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand firm and hold the traditions you were given, both orally and by our letter.

16 Now both our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who has loved us and given us unending comfort and good hope through His grace,

17 Comfort your hearts and stand behind you in every good word and deed.

1. We now come to some of the most important passages of the New Testament dealing with end times. It is first noteworthy that the Thessalonians were concerned that apparently the end was near. This is interesting, because at this time there isn't any great persecution of Christians on Caesar's part, although Claudius had just expelled the Jews from Rome. And in contradiction to the notion that Jesus can come "any time," Paul alludes to the fact that something has not yet occurred that must first happen before the time of judgment. As we see in verse 3, the event must be a "**falling away**," and the revealing of the Antichrist.

2. There is a great deal of argument as to what the word *apostasia*, translated as "**falling away**," means in this passage. The post-tribber correctly understands this word to mean a iniquitous departure from the faith, or a rebellion against God. The pre-tribber asserts the word should mean a physical departure from one place to another. Both sides are technically correct, but the post-tribber's use of the word is more consistent with the way it is used in the Septuagint. The pre-tribber also has a problem in that if Paul has been teaching a clear doctrine of the pre-tribulation Rapture, all he need do is say: "We're still here, so obviously the tribulation hasn't started yet." Clearly then, Paul to this point has not specifically taught the doctrine as is understood today. While this gives the post-tribber cause to gloat, in no way is it "proof" Paul denied such a notion. The Church didn't even have a full understanding of the Trinity at this point since the Scripture had yet to be fully written, so the pre-trib. Rapture doctrine cannot be proved wrong through this passage. As noted in the Matthew 24 commentary, the post-tribber himself has problems in trying to claim that the one who is "**left**" is the one God loves and accepts, so neither side can gain victory through this verse alone.

3. Unquestionably, the Antichrist.

4. See last few verses of Daniel 9. Note also the Antichrist must appear in a literal Temple and claim to be God personified! Again, this shows that the Temple in Jerusalem must be rebuilt before the end. Also, no such event like this ever occurred in the 1st century!

5. Would that we knew just what it was that Paul had taught them! However, this is a very valuable statement of his because it shows that he was drawing upon knowledge that was extant. That knowledge can only have come from the traditions of the Jews regarding the end of the Age, and so if we delve into the beliefs that existed at the time of 50 AD, we can get a more certain foundation upon which to draw on than if we rely wholly on teachings arising in later centuries.

6. The "**He**" who is restraining iniquity is the Holy Spirit, and the restraining force is God's grace. The pre-tribber teaches that it is the church that is holding back the final appearance of the Antichrist; and the church is certainly one of the physical manifestations of God's grace on the earth.

7. Should be translated as: "**The lie**."

8. This verse is used by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to validate the notion of infallible oral tradition. The incumbent problem with the notion of tradition being the equal with Scripture is that tradition can never equal Scripture, for the Scripture will always be interpreted through the tradition (rather than *vice versa*), and thus the tradition will always supersede the Scripture regardless of the intent to make it no more than the "equal" of Scripture.

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Message of the Lord may be spread everywhere without hindrance, and be esteemed even as it is with you.

2 And pray that we will be delivered from the clutches of unreasonable, wicked men--for not all men have faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, and will strengthen you, and keep you from the Evil One.

4 We are confident in the Lord regarding you--that you are doing, and will continue to do, the things we've told you to.

5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and help you patiently endure in Christ.

Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

6 Now in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, brethren, we command you to separate yourselves from every brother who lives an idle, disorderly life, rather than following the pattern we showed you.

7 For you know how to follow our example, for we were not disorderly in our conduct among you.

8 Nor did we eat any of your food without paying for it, but worked day and night to earn money so as not to take anything from you,

9 Not because we didn't have the right to expect support because of our rank as apostles; but we went out of our way to provide for our own needs as an example to you.

10 Even when we were with you, we commanded you that if any man will not work, then he shouldn't eat.

11 We hear, though, that there are some busybodies among you too lazy to get jobs, and not working at all.

12 We encourage and command these, by the Lord Jesus Christ, that they quietly go to work and pay for their own bread [rather than looking to the church for support].

13 The rest of you, brethren, don't be weary in doing well.

14 And if any man does not obey our command in this letter, single him out and have no fellowship with him, that he may be shamed into compliance.

15 But don't view him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of Peace himself always give you peace, and may the Lord be with you all!

17 HERE IS MY PERSONAL SALUTATION, WHICH IS A TOKEN OF EVERY LETTER I WRITE.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

1st Corinthians

The most common misconception amongst Christians regarding the letters to the Corinthian church is that Paul was writing to a congregation of thousands. In fact, the church at Corinth in the time of Paul was very small, numbering probably less than 100 believers, and almost certainly under 200, although we can expand this number somewhat by presuming the letter was intended not just for Corinth, but for all the churches of southern Greece.

In many ways, Corinth itself could be considered the San Francisco of the Roman Empire. A major seaport, it was the hub of commerce between Italy and Turkey, boasting a huge population of over 100,000. Many of its inhabitants were Jews, having taken up residence there after being expelled from Rome by Claudius around 50 AD after fights between Christian and non-Christian Jews.

Corinth was legendary for its licentiousness, and even gave birth to a term coined by Aristophanes: *Corinthianizing*, which meant to go all the way into sin and decadence. (There were supposedly up to a thousand temple prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite.) Bi-annual games were also held there, rivaled only by those in Athens, and this is the basis of Paul's use of sporting terms in these letters.

It is very important to note that the churches in Corinth met in houses, and that only a handful of believers would be present. Therefore, many admonitions (for instance, 1 Cor. 14:27) are directed not toward congregation sizes of today, but were written with twenty or thirty believers in mind. Thus, some theologians incorrectly teach a flawed doctrine that such commands are meant to be legalistically observed in all situations and in all settings, regardless of the number of people in the church.

The famous Oracle of Delphi was near Corinth, and its priestess would inhale fumes of ethylene, causing her to babble incoherently. A scribe would then give an interpretation, and in this manner the fortune of the visitor would be told. The clear parallel here with the Christian gift of Tongues is obvious, and apparently caused problems for Paul as some Christian women--based on Delphic practices--were getting out of order in the church, requiring correction.

The Epistle was written around 54-55 AD from Ephesus.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes¹ our brother,
2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:
3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;
5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;
6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:
7 So that ye come behind in no gift²; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:
8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.³
9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

1 rom Paul--called by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ--and from Sosthenes, our brother,
2 To the church of God at Corinth and its members, who are set apart in Christ Jesus, and called to be righteous ones together with those everywhere else who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of all of us.
3 Grace and peace to you, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
4-8 I always thank my God for you and the grace given you through Jesus Christ that has caused you to be enriched in every word you say and every thing you know, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. Thus, you lack no gracious gift as you await Christ's coming. He will keep you strong in the faith so you will be found blameless on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns [and judges the earth].
9 For God, by whom you were called into relationship with His son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful [and can be counted on to continue the work He has been doing in you].

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ⁴.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize⁵, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words,⁶ lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?⁷ hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:⁸

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called⁹, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things¹⁰ of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.¹¹

10 [Mindful of what He has done for you,] by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, brethren, I beg you all to speak with one voice, and do away with any divisions among you, so that you are perfectly united with the same goals and attitudes.

11 I ask this, my brethren, because I have heard from some of those in the church meeting at Chloe's house that there is strife among you.

12 I hear you all are saying things like: "I am a follower of Paul." "I am a follower of Apollos." "I am a follower of Cephas [Peter]." "I am a follower of Christ."

13 Is Christ divided up into different parts? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God I baptized no one but for Crispus and Gaius,

15 Lest any say that I [was baptizing disciples to myself].

16 Oh--and I did baptize the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't recall baptizing anyone else.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel--and preach it plainly, without relying on creative intellectual arguments [as an orator would employ], lest the [message and power of] the cross of Christ be diluted.

18 For the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved [by it], it is the very power of God!

19 For it is written: **I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.**

20 So then what can the "wise" to say in response to this? Or the Torah teacher? Or the philosopher? Hasn't God turned their worldly wisdom into foolishness?

21 For after God in *His* wisdom decided that the world through *its* wisdom would never know Him, it pleased God to use [simple] "foolish" preaching to save those who will place faith in what they hear.

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks want intellectual persuasion.

23 But we preach to both the concept of a crucified Messiah, which winds up being a stumbling block to the Jews, and utter foolishness to the Greeks.

24 But to those whom God calls, both Jew and Greek, Christ [is the personification of] the power and wisdom of God.

25 This is because the "foolishness" of God is wiser than the greatest wisdom of man, and the "weakness" of God is mightier than the greatest strength of man.

26 Look at those in the church there, brethren. Do you see that God has not called many intellectuals, influential people, or aristocrats?

27 Instead, God has chosen the "morons" of the world to confound the wise, and God has chosen the uneducated [people] of the world to confound those whom the world thinks are wise.

28-29 And the common [people] of the world, and those [people] the world rejects, are the very ones God chooses to use. Yes, those whom men think are nothing, He uses, in turn, to reduce to nothing those whom the world thinks are something, so that no man before Him [can take credit for what *He* has done].

30-31 But through God [and His grace], you are one with Christ Jesus who, through God's plan for us, is the source of all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and

redemption, so that, as it is written: *Let anyone who boasts, boast in the Lord.*

1. Probably the same opponent of Paul in Acts 18:17, who seems to have converted to become a fellow servant of Christ.
2. “**Gift**” could refer to what the church today knows as the “Charismatic Gifts” of the Spirit, but may actually be better understood as Paul’s affirming that there was clear evidence of the abundance of God’s grace and favor poured out upon the believers, who nonetheless needed correction for some of their behavior.
3. Verses 7 and 8 are better paraphrased as: “*Thus, you lack no gracious gift as you await Christ’s coming. He will keep you strong in the faith so you will be found blameless on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth.*”
4. Those who were saying they were “**of Christ**” appear to have held the more mature attitude over those who seem to have been followers of specific ministers. However, they seem to have been a bit arrogant and went the other direction in refusing to accept correction from anyone. Interestingly, Paul rebukes those claiming to be followers of Peter (“**Cephas**”), which can be inferred as calling into question the doctrine that Peter was the head of the church.
5. Though often used as a clarification to the Gospel message showing that salvation is not forensically tied to baptism, the context seems to be that of Paul’s being glad he did not baptize followers to himself.
6. Paul here is making a point that many of us miss: People are not truly converted by reaching them on an intellectual level through the “**wisdom of words**,” but rather through the power of the Spirit. This is one reason why I have only a modest respect for Christian Apologetics. Apologetics is useful mostly to strengthen a believer in his faith against the arguments of skeptics, for 99% of the time the skeptic himself won’t believe because he doesn’t want to believe, and no argument will serve to convince him. Even if it does, the former skeptic rarely continues on in the faith, because one who converts to Christianity on an intellectual basis all too often has converted outside of the drawing of the Spirit, and winds up as one of the unfortunates talked about in the Parable of the Sower. There are exceptions to this, but they are indeed the exception, and not the rule.
7. The “**disputer of this world**” is a reference to philosophers.
8. Once again, a criticism of those who require intellectual proof in order to believe. The Jews require a supernatural sign in order for *their* minds to be satisfied, while the Greeks (Gentiles) require logic and intellectual persuasion.
9. A reference to those who, through the grace imparted by the Spirit, respond to the Gospel from the heart.
10. Although use of the word “**things**” does not clearly convey it, Paul is referring to the non-aristocratic, non-educated people in the Christian community, which fits the context perfectly. More than once, Paul uses the word “**weak**” to refer to someone lacking education (Romans 14:1, for instance). This concept also harmonizes with Christ’s words in Luke 10:21.
11. A good example of two verses that should only be one verse. Verses 30 and 31 could be paraphrased like this: “*But through God’s grace you are one with Christ Jesus, who, through God’s plan for us, is the source of all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: so that, as it is written: Let anyone who boasts, boast in the Lord.*”

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom,¹ declaring unto you the testimony of God.
 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.
 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:
 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.²
 6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought.³
 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:
 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.⁴
 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit:⁵ for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.
 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

1 So when I came to you, brethren, [this is why] I did not declare to you the testimony of God by using brilliant intellectual arguments or deep philosophical wisdom.
 2 For I decided the only thing I wanted to know among you was [this simple message]: Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
 3 In fact, I was weak, fearful, and my knees knocked when I was with you.
 4 And I spoke and preached, not with skilled oratory expressing *man’s* wisdom, but with the demonstration of the Spirit and power,
 5 So that your faith would not be founded on the *persuasion* of man’s wisdom, but rather in the power of God.
 6 But to those who are mature in Christ, we convey a wisdom that is totally different from that of carnal humanity and the demonic origins behind *it*, for they [and their wisdom] will all be overthrown and demolished.
 7-8 We preach the [“illogical”] wisdom of God [in sending a Messiah to be crucified], which is a mystery normal human intellect cannot understand. This was specifically a hidden wisdom that God established for our glory before the world was even created, which even the demonic powers [–and their human puppets–] over this world did not understand. For if they *had* understood it, they would never have crucified the **Lord of Glory**. [So you see, the idea made no sense to them either!]
 9-10 But as it is written in the Scriptures: **Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.** But God has revealed these [once-hidden] mysteries to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches out the deep mysteries of God.
 11 For what man truly knows the [secret] things in his heart save for his own spirit that is in him? In the same way, no man can understand the [hidden] things of God, for only God’s own Spirit

even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.
 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.
 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
 14 But the natural man⁶ receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.⁷
 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

can.
 12 And we have not received the [Satanic] spirit that governs this world, but we have received the Spirit of *God* so that we might be enlightened about all the things that He freely gives us.
 13 So we speak about these things without using human wisdom and the ideas from *it*, but instead using the wisdom that the *Holy Spirit* teaches, discerning and conveying one spiritual mystery after another to spiritual people able to receive it.
 14 However, the [unsaved] natural man rejects the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness so far as his unregenerate mind is concerned. He can't understand them because they must be understood through the enlightenment of the Spirit.
 15-16 But a spiritual person with a mind *enlightened* by the Spirit can understand all things, while the [unsaved, natural man] simply cannot understand nor make a judgment about him and his beliefs [--for to do so would be to make a judgment against the mind and wisdom of God Himself. Remember what Isaiah said in the Scripture:] **For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?** But [--through the Spirit--] we have the very mind of Christ!

1. An acknowledgment of Paul's near complete failure to reach the crowds on Mars' Hill through intellectual debate (Acts 17:32).
2. Once again, an acknowledgment that one should not attempt to reach the unsaved through Apologetics and intellectual persuasion--but through the anointing and power of the Spirit.
3. A very difficult verse that may be better paraphrased as: "*But to those who are mature in Christ, we explain in detail God's wisdom, which is totally different from that of carnal humanity and the demonic origins behind it, for they [and their wisdom] will all be overthrown and demolished.*"
4. Almost certainly an acknowledgment that the "**princes**" referred to are not human authorities, but the demonic principalities behind them who defeated themselves by crucifying Christ through the human rulers they had influence over. Also, the term **Lord of glory**, used both by Paul and James, is a reference to Psalm 24:8, which calls God (YHWH) the "**King of glory**," and is one of many proof texts to show that Christ is God.
5. The actual second half of verse 9 that is almost always ignored when verse 9 is quoted from the pulpit!
6. The "**natural man**," of course, refers both to the lost, who do not have the regeneration of the Spirit enabling them to perceive the way of God in their heart; and also to natural human logic and reasoning. Many of God's laws and ways simply are not logical, and make no logical sense when the natural human mind tries to dissect them intellectually in an attempt to understand them.
7. One the of the most difficult of Paul's passages better understood as: "*But a person whose mind is enlightened by the Spirit can understand all things, while the [unsaved, natural man] simply cannot understand nor make a judgment about him and his beliefs [for to do so would be to make a judgment against the mind and wisdom of God Himself. Remember what Isaiah said in the Scripture:] **For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?** But [--through the Spirit--] we have the very mind of Christ!*"

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.
 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.¹
 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?
 4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?
 5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?
 6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.
 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.
 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

1 But unfortunately, brethren, I could not speak to you on the spiritual level I wanted to reach you on, but I had to speak to you like you were carnal babes in Christ.
 2 I have fed you with milk, not meat, because you weren't able to eat more solid spiritual food, nor can you do so even now!
 3 You are still carnal [letting your childish impulses rule over you]. For since there is envy, strife, and division among you, is this not proof that you're carnal, and not walking as mature men?
 4 When someone is foolish enough to say that, "I am a follower of Paul," or, "I am a follower of Apollos," are you not proving your carnality [and worldly way of thinking]?
 5 Who is Paul or Apollos but ministers who preached the Gospel you believed, each doing the work of the Lord among the specific group he happened to be assigned to?
 6 I planted, Apollos watered--but God did the growing.
 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything--only God, who does the growing, matters.
 8 The planter and the waterer--who have the same goal in mind--are equal in God's eyes, and every man shall receive his own reward based on his own labors.
 9 For Apollos and I are laborers together with God, but you are God's planted field...you are God's building.

God's husbandry, ye are God's building.
 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.
 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;
 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.
 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.
 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.³
 16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?⁴
 17 If any man defile⁵ the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.
 18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.
 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.
 20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.
 21 Therefore let no man glory⁶ in men. For all things are yours;
 22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours⁷;
 23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

10 According to the grace of God that is given to me as a wise master builder, I laid the foundation that another is building on. But let every man be careful of what sort of building he erects.
 11 For no other foundation can be laid [upon which to build], other than the foundation of Jesus Christ.
 12 It's possible for a man to build upon the foundation of Christ a structure of gold, silver, or precious stones. But it's also possible to erect a building of wood, hay, or stubble.
 13 And every man's construction materials will be clearly displayed, for on Judgment Day the fire will show what he used, and the fire will test the quality of his construction.
 14 If any man's work survives the fire, he will receive a reward.
 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss of potential reward, though he, himself, will be saved—but saved like a man running out of a burning house with only the clothes on his back.
 16 Do you not know that you are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God lives inside of you?
 17 And if a man destroys the holy Temple of God, which is what you really are, God shall destroy that man.
 18 So let no man deceive himself. If any of you seems to be wise in worldly wisdom, let him become a fool so that he can *truly* become wise!
 19 Because the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's eyes. For it is written: **He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.**
 20 And it is also written: **The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.**
 21 Therefore, let no man boast about [or take his identity from] mere men [like Paul and Apollos]. Everything we do, we do for your benefit, for we are here to serve you.
 22 Whether it is Paul, Apollos, Cephas [Peter], the earth, or life or death, or things in the present, or things to come—all of it is made for your benefit and good.
 23 And you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

1. This fact is universally overlooked when the book of 1st Corinthians is studied. Although we usually look to it as plumbing the depths of Christian theology, Paul seems to indicate here that he is forced to limit himself to reaching out to the Corinthians with only superficial teachings of the faith.

2. Paul here is characterizing the quality of Christian service amongst the teachers of the church. The “**wood, hay and stubble**” referred to may be viewed as the ministries of those who sought their own glory, or who outwardly did the work of God for improper motives.

3. This is the strongest verse in the New Testament used by Catholicism to justify the teaching of Purgatory, but it fails to conform to the doctrine that Purgatory is where God completes any remaining punishment a person deserves for the sins (Heb. 12:5-6) that He was unable to deliver prior to death, nor does it appear to be a process where the Christian is delivered from any remaining attraction to sin. That the verse refers to one who has failed to use his life and talents well for the glory of the Master, but still escapes hell to enter eternal life with little or no reward, appears to make the most sense.

4. In opposition to the teachings of some, Paul is not saying Christians are “in relationship” with the Spirit of God, but the text here indicates literally that the Spirit of God is supernaturally housed within the Christian's body in the same way the Christian's own spirit is spatially located within his own body. The words here for “**dwelt in**” in Greek mean to live inside of a house.

5. “**Defile**” should be translated: “**Destroy**.”

6. “**Glory**” should be translated: “**Boast**.”

7. Paul's point in the last two verses was to say that rather than see themselves as followers of certain ministers like Apollos or even Paul himself, the Corinthians must understand that these ministers actually belong to the people as their servants, to help them grow—which is what he means when he uses the phrase, “**All are yours**.”

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
 2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.
 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Therefore, let people see us as nothing more than ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
 2 And it is required of a steward that he be faithful to what he has been called to do.
 3 But so far as I am concerned, it matters very little to me what you, or any others sitting in judgment, think of me. I

judge not mine own self.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.
5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.¹

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written,² that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?³

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings⁴ without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.⁵

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers⁶: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.⁷

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my⁸ ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

don't even worry about scrutinizing myself.

4 For I can't think of anything wrong I have done. But I am not justified on the basis of having a clear conscience, but rather through the examination [and approval] of the Lord.

5 Therefore, don't presume [to judge and praise one person above another] in the Age we live in; leave that to the Lord, who will do that himself when He comes and brings to light the things done in secret, weighing the motives of the heart, and then each man shall have whatever praise from God that he actually deserves.

6 Brethren, I have expressed these concepts using myself and Apollos as examples to you so you might learn from us not to overly exalt any human man, but to think of us as no better than the sinners [saved by grace] that the writings of Scripture reveal we are, so none of you there thinks himself better than the next man.

7 What makes you think yourselves better than everyone else? What do you have that was not given to you [by someone else]? And if you admit someone else gave it to you, why do you act as if you had invented it yourself?

8 Now you are full. Now you are rich. You have been arrogant as kings, refusing any correction or reproof from us. Well, I wish you *were* all kings so we could reign with you!

9 For I think that God has appointed we apostles to be like captives marching at the end of a Roman triumphal parade as a public spectacle to the world, the angels, and to men.

10 We are morons for the sake of Christ, while you are the wise ones in Christ. We are the weak ones, while you are strong. You are respected, while we are scorned.

10 [*Alternate reading*]: We are morons for the sake of Christ, while you are the wise ones in Christ. We are the "illiterate" ones, while you are "intellectuals." You are respected, while we are scorned.

11 Even until now, we hunger and thirst. We are naked, beaten, and have no place that we can call home.

12 We labor, working with our hands. When cursed, we say blessings in return. When persecuted, we endure it in silence.

13 When slandered, we answer politely, though we are treated like scum and dirt even to this day.

14 I am not writing these things to shame you, but I write to warn you as beloved sons.

15 For even if you have ten thousand teachers in Christ, you don't have many fathers. For, in Christ Jesus, I fathered you through the Gospel.

16 Because of this, I implore you to follow my example.

17 For this reason, I have sent my beloved son Timothy, who is faithful in the Lord. He will reiterate the principles of proper conduct in Christ that I teach in every church.

18 However, some of you are arrogant, as though I will never return to you.

19 But I will visit shortly, if the Lord wills, and then I'll see for myself—not the *words* of these arrogant people, but what power they have to back up their words.

20 For the Kingdom of God doesn't stand on mere words, but it stands upon the power of God!

21 So how do you want me to come to you? With a switch, ready to use it on you; or in love, with a meek spirit?

1. Verses 1 through 5 are a continuation of the thoughts being expressed at the end of chapter three. Unfortunately, they are written in a confusing manner, but can be paraphrased like this:

Therefore, let people see us as nothing more than ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. And it is required of a steward that he be faithful to what he has been called to do.

But so far as I am concerned, it matters very little to me what you, or any others sitting in judgment, think of me. I don't even worry about scrutinizing myself.

For I can't think of any wrongdoing I have done. But I am not justified on the basis of having a clear conscience, but rather through the examination [and approval] of the Lord.

Therefore, don't presume [to praise one person above another] in the Age we live in; leave that to the Lord, who will do that himself when he comes and brings to light the things done in secret, weighing the motives of the heart, and then each man shall have whatever praise [or condemnation] from God that he actually deserves.

2. Contrary to popular evangelical belief, this verse is not necessarily an endorsement of the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. When Paul is saying '**not to go beyond what is written**,' his point is not to make the claim that only Scripture is profitable to derive correction from; he is commanding them not to glorify man—including Paul himself—whom Scripture reveals is unworthy of exaltation on his best day, compared to God who alone is pure. Some suspect that he is quoting a proverb, but there is insufficient evidence to verify that theory.
3. Better paraphrased as: *What makes you think yourselves better than everyone else? What do you have that was not given to you [by someone else]? And if you admit someone else gave it to you, why do you act as if you had invented it yourself?*
4. "**Reigned as kings**" is an idiom meaning to be arrogant and unteachable, acting like a king who is under no one's authority.
5. Paul is sarcastically mocking the Corinthians' attitudes toward he and his co-workers. Also, Paul goes on to use of the family of words translated in his epistles as "**weak**," "**infirmities**," or "**strong**," not to refer to *frailty* or *strength*, but to either possessing knowledge/education or *not* possessing it, which account for the alternate translation here, which continues the thought expressed in the first sentence. See the commentaries for 1:27, 14:1, and Rom. 8:26.
6. It should be noted that some anti-Catholics rebuke the church for priests being called "father" based on Matt. 23:9, yet here Paul—probably reluctantly—uses the same title about himself. This is because we see there was an issue about who had authority to instruct the church there, and in the culture the *father* was the one who taught the children proper morality.
7. Paul is not coming against the admonition of Christ in the Gospels, nor is he trying to draw followers after himself; rather, he is saying to follow his example of seeking only after the glory of Christ.
8. Once more, a verse calling into question Peter's primacy over the church, for Paul makes it clear that Gentile Christian practices came not from Peter, but through Paul himself.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

- 1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.¹
- 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.
- 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,
- 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh,² that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
- 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?
- 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven,³ that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:
- 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.⁴
- 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle⁵ not to company with fornicators:
- 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.
- 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

- 1 Word has spread far and wide that there is a case of fornication among you so bad that not even the Gentiles have anything to compare to it: One of you is in an incestuous relationship with his own stepmother!
- 2 And you are actually proud [of your tolerance and non-judgmental attitude toward this person], instead of grieving over such a situation and taking action to expel the man guilty of this sin!
- 3 [Since you won't take action—I will!] Though absent in body, but present in my spirit, I have judged the case of this individual as if I were there in person.
- 4 [And so I decree:] In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together with my spirit, and with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 5 Excommunicate and hand this person over to Satan for the destruction of his [physical life] so that his spirit may yet be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus.
- 6 Your pride over this is not good. Don't you know that: *A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?*
- 7 Throw out the old leaven so that you can be a fresh lump of unleavened dough—for Christ, our Passover lamb, is sacrificed for us.
- 8 Therefore, let us keep the Feast, not with old leavened bread, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but let us keep it with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
- 9 Remember, I wrote you *before* not to fellowship with fornicators!
- 10 I didn't mean the fornicators of this [unsaved] world, nor with its greedy, its extortionists, or its idolaters—for to totally separate yourselves from these, you would have to leave the world altogether.
- 11 But to clarify what I meant, I now write to you that you must not fellowship with any man who is called a brother if he is a fornicator, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, drunkard, or an extortionist. I don't want you to even eat at the same table with such people [lest it appear that you endorse their

no not to eat.⁶

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

behavior].

12 For what authority do I have to judge those outside the community? [None.] So why aren't you reasonably judging those *within* the church?

13 But those outside the church God will judge. Therefore, *cast out from among you* that wicked person [and let God judge him]!

1. Apparently, this man was living with his stepmother, a violation of Lev. 18:8.

2. Verse 5 is very enigmatic and difficult to understand. We see no other clear reference to something similar by any other writer in the Bible, and so we cannot know for certain precisely what Paul has instituted here, or what its precise purpose is. From the best we can glean from the text, Paul seemed to have a belief that the community of believers had the authority to grant the devil the right to bring pressure upon this man. (Interestingly, the woman is not mentioned, so apparently she was not a Christian.) This pressure, Paul felt, would seemingly be sufficient to make his life uncomfortable enough that he would repent. An alternate understanding of the verse is that Paul meant for the devil to take the life of the man before he had gone so far as to disqualify himself from salvation and be lost, but this notion is rejected by those believing in "Once saved, always saved" doctrine.

3. Leaven in the New Testament refers to sin, teaching, or practices, and here Paul is making an allusion to the Jewish practice of searching the house before Passover to remove every bit of leaven (down to beans and rice in the case of some Jews), that the house may be clean for the Festival. The allusion here is that the community of believers should purge out all uncleanness from their group. Paul is *not* somehow literally advocating the Gentile believers keep the Jewish Passover--if for no other reason than that the lamb cannot be prepared and eaten outside of Jerusalem and its Temple!

4. While some Messianics do claim that Paul here is confirming that both Jew and Gentile were to keep the Jewish Festivals, he actually was speaking figuratively, and directing his comments to the elders of the church, most of whom would be Jews that would understand his allusions. In addition to the lamb being forbidden to be eaten outside of Jerusalem, we know he cannot be teaching the Gentiles to eat it because physically uncircumcised people were forbidden to eat the Passover lamb in the first place (Ex. 12:48)! Since Paul makes it clear in Galatians that Gentiles need not and must not be circumcised, clearly he did not expect these same Gentiles to even keep Festivals like Passover, which is confirmed in Gal. 4:10, where he specifically rebukes the Galatians for keeping "times"--which refers to the *appointed times*, or Jewish Festivals.

5. This original letter to the Corinthians has unfortunately been lost; the letter here is actually the second letter to Corinth.

6. Tough talk in which Paul here, in contradiction to what many from our culture might believe, is saying that any member of the church involved in sexual impropriety, greed, idolatry, mischief-making, excessive drinking*, or less-than-upright business practices should be booted from the community and treated like a heathen until he repents.

* Paul absolutely is not teaching that Christians are forbidden to drink alcohol; the prohibition is against drunkenness only.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?¹

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.²

5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.³

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

1 [While we're talking about judging cases in the church,] do any of you with a dispute against another in the community go and argue your cases before the unjust, rather than seeking judgment from the righteous?

2 Do you not know that the righteous will someday rule the world? And if you will rule the world, are you really not qualified to judge the simplest matters?

3 Don't you know we will rule over angels? So how much more should we have charge over the issues in *this* life?

4 Since you have issues of this life needing judgment, is it that you are setting up those least qualified in the church to do the judging [so the others in the community resort to secular judges]?

5 I say this to shame you: Is there not even one wise man in the community who can make a fair judgment between his brethren?

6 But brother goes to court against brother, and the court they go to is one judged by unbelievers.

7 The members of the community have no business suing each other anyway! Why don't you rather accept the wrong done to you? Why aren't you willing to allow yourself to be defrauded [and leave it to *God* to vindicate you]?

8 Instead, you go out to wrong and defraud others--and your fellow Christians at that!

9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Neither those who commit sexual sin outside of marriage, nor idolaters, nor heterosexual adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor [unrepentant] homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortionists, will inherit the Kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you:⁴ but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.⁵

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.⁶

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price:⁷ therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

11 In time past, some of you were one or more of these things. But you were washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and placed in a state of right standing in the name of the Lord Jesus, through the Spirit of our God.

12-14 "All things are Lawful unto me"--but I want you to know that all things are not necessarily good. "All things are Lawful for me"--but I will not be brought under the power of any. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats"--but God shall destroy both it and them. The body also is not made for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord wants the best for it. And God has raised up the Lord Jesus [from the dead], and will also raise us up by His own power.

15 Don't you know that your bodies are the body parts of Christ [on the earth]? Shall I then take parts of Christ's body and mate them with a prostitute?! God forbid!

16 What? You mean you don't know that he who mates with a prostitute becomes one body with her? *For two*, God says in Scripture, *shall become one flesh*.

17 But he who is spiritually mated to the Lord becomes one spirit.

18 Run as fast as you can from sexual sin! Every other sin a man might commit is one done *by* the body rather than *with* the body. But he [or she] who commits sexual sin, sins with and against his body.

19 What? You didn't know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is inside of you, and given by God, thus meaning that you no longer belong to yourself?

20 For someone put his own life at risk to save you [--and now, according to custom, he owns your very life, and you have a debt you can never repay to get back your own freedom]. So glorify God in both your body and spirit, which belong to Him.

1. Paul seems to appeal to the tradition of the Noachide commandments (see *What you never knew about the New Testament's view of the Law*), held by Judaism as the laws by which God meant Gentiles to live, one of which is to establish courts of justice.

2. This is one of the worst-handled verses in the King James Bible. It should be rendered like this: **"If you have issues of this life needing judgment, is it that you are setting up those least qualified in the church to do the judging?"**

3. It should be noted that the list of sinners in verses 9 and 10 disqualified from salvation refers to those who practice and justify these sins, not to those brethren who struggle with sins like homosexuality.

4. Although Paul here shows that some of the Corinthians had practiced these sins in the past, but no longer, this should not be understood to be saying that "true" Christians are magically delivered from all sinful desires and never need struggle with them again. It should also be noted that the remainder of the verse incorrectly uses the word **"are"** (**"are washed,"** etc.). It should be translated as: **"Were."**

5. Verses 12 and 13 are often misunderstood, for Paul is repeating and correcting the abuse arising out of a common saying and belief among the Corinthians. He is not making an intentional theological statement about the Law having passed away, for instance. The verses could be written in our grammar and punctuation like so:

"All things are lawful unto me"--but all things are not expedient. "All things are lawful for me"--but I will not be brought under the power of any.

"Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats"--but God shall destroy both it and them. *

* The next line of verse 13 (**"Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body"**) probably should be treated as the beginning of verse 14, not the end of verse 13.

6. The condemnation against immorality here traces itself to a belief by some at the time that sex was as important to the body as food, thus giving birth to licentiousness in the church.

7. **"Bought with a price"** is an Eastern idiom meaning that someone has saved another's life at great personal risk to himself.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.¹

2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.²

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

1 Now concerning the questions you wrote about: Yes, it is good for a husband to refrain from having relations with his wife at times.

2 Nevertheless, to avoid the chances of being tempted into fornication, let husbands and wives have normal physical relations.

3 Let the husband give the wife what she has a right to

benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

5 Defraud³ ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.⁴

7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.⁵

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband.⁶

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.⁷

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not⁸, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.⁹

15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases:¹⁰ but God hath called us to peace.

16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised.¹¹

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.¹²

20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

25 Now concerning virgins¹³ I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my

expect, and *vice versa*.

4 In marriage, each person gives up the rights over his body to the other person, husbands to wives, and wives to husbands.

5 Don't deny one another unless you both agree to dedicate yourselves to [fasting and] prayer. Then have relations again so Satan does not tempt you.

6 But I say this by God's permission, not His command.

6 [Alternate reading]: But what I am going to say [in verse 8] is by God's permission, and not by His command.

7 For I wish that all people were celibate as I am. But every man has his proper gift from God, be it [marriage or celibacy].

8 So I say to the single people and the widows, it is good for them to continue in that state like I do.

9 But if they cannot handle temptation, let them marry, for it is better to be married than to struggle constantly with lust.

10 And to those who are married, the Lord—not I—commands: "Let the wife not separate from her husband."

11 But if she does depart, she must not remarry, though she can reconcile with her husband. Also, the husband must not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest, I—not the Lord—say: If a brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and that woman wishes to continue living with him as his wife, he should not divorce her.

13 And the woman who has an unbelieving husband should stay with him if he wishes to continue living with her as well.

14 For the unbelieving husband is [made positionally holy] within the marriage by his wife, and *vice versa*. Otherwise, your children would be *treif*. But they are kosher in God's eyes.

15 But if the unbeliever departs the marriage, let him or her go. A brother or sister is not bound in such cases. But keep in mind that God has called us to peace [and reconciliation when possible].

16 For who can say, O wife, whether your witness will someday result in your husband embracing the Gospel? Likewise, who can say, O man, whether your influence will wind up saving your wife?

17 I say this because in every church I make the rule that each man should accept the background in which God called him, and then walk in the faith from that point on.

18 So is any man called to Christ in a state of being physically circumcised? [In other words, as a Jew?] Then he should not become uncircumcised. [In other words, he should not abandon his Judaism.] In the same way, is a man called in a state of being physically uncircumcised? [In other words, as a Gentile?] Then he should not become circumcised. [In other words, he should not become Jewish.]

19-20 Being physically Jewish is as meaningless as being physically Gentile. But keeping the commands of God, let every man abide in the same calling [—be that Jewish or non-Jewish—] that he was first called in.

21 In other cases, are you called, being a slave? Don't worry about gaining your freedom. But if you can be free, then be so.

22 For a man who is called in the Lord as a slave is really the Lord's freeman. In the same way, he who is called as a freeman is in reality Christ's slave.

23 Christ paid a great personal price to save you, so don't consider yourselves the slaves of *men*!

24 Again, brethren, let every man continue in the circumstances that God has called him, and develop his

judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none.¹⁴

30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

38 So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.¹⁵

40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.¹⁶

relationship with God therein.

25 Now concerning unmarried women: I have no solid command from the Lord on the subject, but I will share my own considered opinion as a person who has experienced the mercy of the Lord to make me faithful:

26 I think that in our present circumstances of persecution by the world, it is good for a man to be single.

27 But do you have a wife? Then don't seek [divorce]. Are you without a wife? Then don't seek to find one.

28 But if you marry, you have not fallen short of what God deems appropriate. And if a woman marries, she has not fallen short of the mark either. Even so, married people will have problems in their lives, something I'd like to spare you.

28 [Alternate reading]: But if you marry, you have not fallen short of what God deems appropriate. And if a woman marries, she has not fallen short of the mark either. Even so, married people will have problems in their lives. However, I release you to make your own decisions on this issue.

29 Let me make this point, though: The time is short. So men who have wives should not let marriage be what they focus on.

30 And those who now weep should live as though they weep not; they that rejoice as if they do not rejoice; they that buy [and trade] as if they had no goods requiring their constant attention.

31 And those with possessions and influence in the world should not become intertwined by them, for the normal patterns of human existence are passing away.

32 I want you to be free of various worldly cares, so keep in mind that he who is unmarried concerns himself with the things of the Lord, and how he can please him.

33 But he who is married is forced to concern himself with earthly matters like how to keep his wife happy.

34 There is also a difference between a wife and a single woman. The single woman cares for the things of the Lord so she can be holy both in body and spirit. But she who is married cares for earthly matters like how to please her husband.

35 Now this I say for your benefit—to do what is best, and not to drag you around by a leash—so you can serve the Lord without being distracted.

36 But if a man who is betrothed to a woman feels he cannot adequately deal with his passions unless he gets married—and his fiancée is of mature years—then he should go ahead and marry her. Certainly, there's no sin in that.

37 Nevertheless, a man who has his passions under control, and who has decided to remain celibate so far as his betrothed fiancée is concerned, does good.

38 So then the man who delivers his fiancée into marriage does well. But a man who does not deliver her into marriage does even better.

39 After marriage, the wife is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, she can marry whomever she wishes so long as the man is a believer in the Lord.

40 But she will be happier if she stays single. At least, that's my opinion; and I think my opinion agrees with the Spirit of God.

1. What a pity we do not have the original letter from Corinth asking the questions! This fact has given rise to some bad translations and understandings of these passages. First, "**man**" and "**woman**" in this verse should be translated as "**husband**" and "**wife**" as both words are in verse 2. The verse could thus be paraphrased as: "*Now concerning the questions you asked, it is good for a husband to refrain from having relations with his wife at times.*" (For temporary purposes of seeking God, not because sex is somehow bad.)

2. "**Have**" obviously means to, "*Have sexual relations with.*"

3. Better translated as: “**Deprive**.” Also, the words “**fasting and**” in the verse are a later addition to the text.
4. Although the text reads best viewing verse 6 as concluding statements made in verses 1-5, it could actually be referring to the upcoming statement in verse 8. Paul would thus be admitting his admonition is not a commandment, but he thinks that the unmarried and widows should stay single if possible.
5. Paul here clearly understands that some people simply cannot live a celibate lifestyle, and that these folks—if they lack the faith and spiritual strength to do so—should marry to remove that stumbling block from their Christian walk.
6. This should not be taken as a command to stay with a spouse under any and all circumstances. (For instance, in a physically abusive relationship.) Paul is presuming a stable relationship in which one partner for some reason desires to separate from the other when personal safety is not a factor.
7. This is a very important message to Christians in our day and age: Divorce and remarriage are not options except in cases of adultery or abandonment (see verse 15). Christians who divorce for reasons other than these two listed reasons are in adultery if they remarry. Nothing in the Scriptures suggests that relationships prior to conversion factor into this command.
8. “**Believeth not**” refers to a non-Christian spouse.
9. There is debate on what Paul means here. The best speculation is that he is saying that when the couple become one flesh, the unbeliever is given the benefits of the believer’s state of purity before God, resulting in any offspring being considered to have been conceived in a state of sanctification. The believing spouse is also protected from spiritual defilement from normal sexual relations with a spouse who is not a Christian. The only way to fully convey Paul’s thoughts when he declares a child to otherwise be “**unclean**,” is to use the Hebrew word *treif*, which refers to something being non-kosher, and thus not up to full acceptable standard.
10. This verse appears to give license for remarriage if a Christian’s *non-Christian* spouse abandons or divorces them.
11. One of the most important verses in the New Testament dealing with the false doctrines of some Messianic believers. Paul here commands that Jews and Gentiles remain in their cultural milieu. This is an absolute denial of the false doctrine that God requires Gentile believers to follow Mosaic Law once they accept Christ. Likewise, Paul encourages Jews to remain within their own cultural background, and remain faithful to keeping the Torah. (My opinion for that is in order to maintain a cultural identity, and to keep from a possible violation of their conscience from having had drilled into their heads all their lives they *had* to keep those commands—not because God still *required* it of them!) Thus, God equally accepts both Torah-observant Jews and non-observant Gentiles, and neither side is required to adopt or reject Mosaic practices in order to obtain or retain salvation.
12. Paul here may not necessarily be speaking only of the physical act of circumcision. “**Circumcision**” can be considered a synonym for being Jewish and Torah-observant versus being a non-observant Gentile. With that in mind, Paul could be paraphrased like so: “*Being physically Jewish is meaningless, just as physically being a Gentile is, for keeping the commands* of God is what truly matters, whether one is Jewish or not.*” The paraphrase, meanwhile, takes another view as some food for thought.

* Those commands are not the entirety of the 613 laws of Moses, but rather the universal moral precepts within those laws. We know this because Paul obviously is not contradicting himself, and he just exempted Gentiles from becoming Jewish while in verse 12 he repeats that every man should remain in the state in which he found Christ—either fully observant, or unobservant, but for the reasonable moral precepts of the faith. It is impossible for Paul to be teaching that all should keep Mosaic Law while commanding Jew and Gentile to remain in the state in which they were called—especially in light of the fact that a physically uncircumcised man is forbidden by the Law to eat the Passover lamb. The uncircumcised also is forbidden to enter the Temple to participate in the Festivals the Law demands be observed. The word for “**commandments**” also does not necessarily refer to the commandments in the Law, but can also refer to simple orders or instructions, hence the author’s rendering it as *commands* rather than *commandments*.

13. Meaning unmarried daughters of a Christian man. There is debate as to whether the verses following relate to the woman’s father or fiancée.
14. The last few verses were motivated by the mistaken apostolic oral tradition that Jesus would be returning within the lifetime of the apostles (John 21:23).
15. Often the basis for a teaching that divorced persons are denied remarriage for any reason until their former spouse dies, but that strict interpretation of the verse seems inconsistent with both verse 15 and the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels regarding adultery.
- 16 When Paul says he has “**the Spirit of God**,” he is probably using the phrase in its typical form for the time: that of a Jewish idiom for “the wisdom (or inspiration) of God.”

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 8

1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

2 And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols¹, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 8

1 Now as regards foods that have been offered up in idolatrous rituals before being sold, we know that we all have knowledge [regarding things like there is only one God]. Knowledge, however, puffs up, while love *builds* up.

2 [And no man is as smart as he thinks he is, something you should keep in mind.]

3 But if a man loves God—God recognizes that man!

4 So in the matter of eating those meats and things that have been sacrificed to idols, we all know that an idol is nothing, and that there is only *one* God in the world.

5 For though there are many beings men call gods, whether in the heavens or on earth, including many “gods” or “lords”[in the form of human rulers],

6 To us, there is only one God—the Father—out of which came all things [including those beings trying to pass themselves off as gods], to whom we belong. And there is also one Lord, Jesus Christ, who created all things [including these beings], and by

Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.
 7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak² is defiled.
 8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.
 9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak².
 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak² be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;
 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak² brother perish, for whom Christ died?
 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak² conscience, ye sin against Christ.
 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.³

whom we have our very existence.
 7 But not everyone has that knowledge. Some people still think there are actually other gods in existence, and when they eat such foods, they eat in conscious belief of the “gods” behind the practice [thinking those gods are taking notice of them; or else they eat it as acts of worship toward an idol]. Thus, their uneducated and immature consciences are defiled.
 8 But meat that we eat does nothing at all to make us more or less acceptable to God. Whether or what we eat has no bearing on anything, really. It’s neither good nor bad.
 9 But be careful, lest the freedom you have becomes a stumbling block to a man who is less knowledgeable in the faith.
 10 For if such a man sees you, with your knowledge, in the temple of a false god eating some of the sacrificial offerings, won’t the conscience of this less-educated brother prompt him to go in and eat himself [thinking it’s allowable to participate in pagan rituals]?
 11 Should your less-mature brother, for whom Christ died, perish because of your superior knowledge?
 12 When you do things like this to cause immature brethren to stumble against their consciences, you are sinning against Christ.
 13 So if my eating meat will cause my brother to stumble [and sin], I will not eat meat while the world stands, lest I be the cause of my brother stumbling.

1. Paul here is dealing with the concerns of those afraid that they were committing sin by obtaining meat that had previously been used in idolatrous religious ceremonies. The meat from such sacrifices was often given out, or else sold—and since the Torah forbids sacrificing to idols, some were concerned. Paul points out that idols are not true gods, and thus there is no reason to discriminate against food that may have previously been used in pagan religious ceremonies.
 Some have attempted to claim a contradiction between what Paul says here, and Rev. 2:20. The difference between the two should be obvious: Jezebel had literally been leading the church in worshipping idols and making sacrifices to them. Paul, in contrast, is referring only to meat that had come from pagan rites the Christians had no direct participation in. Even the term “**Sit at meat in the idol's temple**” mentioned at the end of the chapter, did not refer to the Christian having made sacrifice to foreign gods, but rather to having dined on free food given to the poor by some of these temples.

2. Meaning that some in Corinth still had the mistaken belief that there were deities other than the One God, and that by eating these sacrifices they were subjecting themselves to the influence of, or else paying conscious homage to, these gods. Also, as was noted in the introduction and earlier in this chapter, Paul often uses the word “**weak**” to refer to someone uneducated or immature in the faith. All these are examples where the word “**weak**” refers to one’s lack of knowledge of the faith affecting his maturity, and causing him to stumble because of his lack of education in doctrine and practice.
 3. It is very important to understand that Paul’s use of the word “**offend**” does not refer to someone who takes umbrage at Paul’s doing something the person himself thinks is wrong, causing him to become resentful. Paul means someone who sees him doing something and then imitates it or does it although in his heart he thinks the act is sinful.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 9

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free?¹ have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?² are not ye my work in the Lord?
 2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.
 3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,
 4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?
 5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife,³ as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?
 6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?
 7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?
 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 9

1 Am I not an apostle? Don’t I have the right to expect the support that should come with that, without having to toil for it? Have I not seen, face-to-face, Jesus Christ our Lord? And are you not my *work* in the Lord?
 2 If I’m not an apostle to anyone else, I am undoubtedly one to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.
 3 So my answer to my critics is this:
 4 Do we apostles not have the right to have a decent meal and something to drink?
 5 Have we not the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as the other apostles, the kinsmen of the Lord, and as Cephas [Peter] does?
 6 Or do only Barnabas and I have to work day and night to take care of our own needs?
 7 What warring soldier pays for his own equipment and food? What farmer plants a vineyard and doesn’t eat from it? Who feeds a flock and takes no milk from it?
 8 Is this just my own opinion? Doesn’t the Torah say as much

law the same also?⁴

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.⁵

18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;⁶

21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

22 To the weak⁷ became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

also?

9 For it is written in the Torah of Moses: **Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.** Now did God say that because He's worried about what an ox eats?

10 Or was He saying that somehow for our benefit, so we men could learn an important axiom? It was for our sakes, no doubt, that this was written--so that a man who plows should plow in confidence that he will *see* a harvest, and that a man who threshes grain should thresh, *expecting* to partake of the grain!

11 Since we have sown spiritual things amongst you, is it outrageous if we reap from some of your *natural* things in return?

12 If others [who came after us] have this right over you, don't we [who brought you the Gospel to start with] have an even *greater* right?! Even so, we have never exercised our rights over you, but we endure our problems on our own without burdening you, lest we should somehow hinder the Gospel of Christ.

13 But are you unaware that those who minister amongst the holy things in the Temple live off the offerings at the Temple; or that those who serve at the altar eat the offerings from the altar?

14 In the same way, the Lord has established the precept that those who preach the Gospel should live off the Gospel.

15 But I have used none of these precepts to my own advantage, nor am I writing to start making use of them now, for it would be better for me to die than do that! I won't let any man have cause to criticize me, and rob me of the pride I take in what I do!

16 For though I preach the Gospel, I can take no credit for my ministry, because I am doing this because I was commanded to.

In fact, woe is me if I *don't* preach it!

17 If I preach willingly, I am doing something for which God will reward me; but, willingly or not, God has given a commission to me.

18 So what is my reward then? Well, it's [the pride I take in] preaching the Gospel of Christ without profiting off it so that I don't abuse my authority in the Gospel.

19 For though I'm not a slave, but am free, I have made myself a slave to all men so that I might save as many as I can.

20 Thus, when I am around Jews, I emphasize my Jewish background and traditions so that I might reach the Jews with the Gospel message. So to those under the Torah, I appeal to them on the basis of one who thoroughly understands the Torah and what the men I meet believe about it, in hope that I might reach those who are under the Torah.

21 To reach those not under the Torah, I appeal to them as one who is also not under the Torah, though by saying that I do not mean that I live a reprobate life before God; but rather, that I live out the Torah of Christ [who has placed the perfect law of love into my heart].

22-23 To the uneducated, I likewise appear uneducated [speaking in simple terms and precepts]. I try to find something in common with all men so that I might reach out and save some, and I do this for the sake of the Gospel so that we can both share in its blessings.

24 Do you not know that while many run in a race, only one wins the prize? So run so you can win that prize!

25 Every man who devotes himself to mastering a sport doesn't give in to excess in anything. Athletes train and deny themselves in many ways in order to win a laurel crown that will dry up and waste away--but we do the same thing to win a crown that can never waste away!

26 So I fix my gaze on the finish line and sprint as hard as I can to reach it. And I also fight like a man who spars with real opponents instead of just shadow boxing.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:
27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

27 Even so, I still keep my own body under subjection [to my spirit], lest somehow I fail to measure up and, after having preached the truth to others, I find myself cast away.

1. This is one of those sentences that the person delivering the letter would have explained. It's also an example of Paul's habit of condensing two or three sentences of what he means into just one. When Paul speaks of being "**free**," he means, "*As an apostle, aren't I supposed to be free from the responsibility of working for my own upkeep? Don't I have a right to expect support from the churches instead of toiling day and night to support myself?*" See verses 6, 11, and 12.
2. Some teach a doctrine from misusing this verse, claiming that only someone who literally saw Jesus was qualified to be an apostle. This flies in the face of examples like Epaphroditus, called in Greek an *apostle* in Phil. 2:25, along with a number of other brethren in 2 Cor. 8:23 likewise dubbed "**messengers**," although the word is the same for "**apostle**." Barnabas, in Acts 14:15, is also called an apostle, although there is no certain proof he ever knew Jesus personally.
3. An interesting point by Paul, directly challenging the Western rites of the Catholic Church, which mandate priestly celibacy. Scholars of course, debate whether the term "**brethren of the Lord**" refers to cousins or actual brothers of Christ. In all probability, it refers to cousins for reasons stated in the commentary in Matthew.
4. Sometimes used to accuse Paul of hypocrisy for teaching that Christians "aren't under the Law," while appealing to the Torah to validate his views. Well, there is no real inconsistency. As I have attempted to point out, Paul never repudiated the keeping of the Torah as lifestyle and culture (though he affirmed that the Torah as an obligatory covenant was no longer in force); he merely remained consistent with the more liberal strain of Judaism which held that Gentiles need not keep the full Torah in order to worship God.
5. Better paraphrased as: "*If I preach willingly, I am doing something for which God will reward me; but, willingly or not, God has given a commission to me.*"
6. This, and the next few verses, are sometimes used by skeptics to accuse Paul of hypocritically pretending to be something he is not—for instance, an observant Jew when he (supposedly) has concluded the Law has passed away. In fact, the verse records that Paul tried to reach people where they were at by finding something in common with them. Being an observant Jew himself, it was easy for Paul to interact with fellow Jews, while with unobservant Gentiles he could minister to them without expounding on the types and shadows pointing toward Christ in Mosaic Law.
7. "**Weak**" is better understood as: "**Uneducated**."

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;¹
3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;
4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them;² and that Rock was Christ.
5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.
6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.
7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play³.
8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.⁴
9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.
10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.
11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.⁵
12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.
13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

1 Moreover, brethren, I want you to keep in mind how our ancestors were all underneath the cloud of God that was above their camp, and that they all passed through the sea,
2 And were all baptized into Moses by passing under the cloud and through the sea.
3-4 They also ate the same spiritual food [--the manna--] and also drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed along behind them. That rock, by the way, was actually a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ [and foretold his sending the Holy Spirit to humanity]!
5 Even so, God was displeased with many of them, for they were destroyed in the wilderness [despite having received a promise that God would lead them into a good land].
6 These events are examples to us not to lust after evil things as they did.
7 Nor should we be idolaters as some of them were. For it is written: **The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.**
8 Neither let us partake of sexual sin as some of them did. Twenty-three thousand died for that in one day!
9 Neither let us challenge Christ as some of them challenged [God]. Snakes destroyed them for this.
10 Neither should you grumble and complain as some of them did, and were slain by the angel called "the Destroyer."
11 Now all these things that happened to them were examples to us, and they are written as admonition to us, who are approaching the end of the world [to behave properly].
12 So let he who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall!
13 There is no temptation that you have faced which isn't normal to humanity. But God is faithful, who will not let more come upon you than you are able to bear. And with every temptation, He will make a way to escape so you can bear it [without being overcome by it].

will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
 14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.
 15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.
 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?
 17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.
 18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?
 19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?
 20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.
 21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.⁶
 22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?
 23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.⁷
 24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.⁸
 25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:
 26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.
 27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.
 28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.⁹
 29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?
 30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?
 31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.
 32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:
 33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.¹⁰

14 Because of this, my dearly beloved, run from idolatry [and any thought of worshipping God *and* other "deities"].
 15 I know I am talking to wise men, so judge whether or not what I say makes sense.
 16 The cup of blessing that we pray over--is it not partaking of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break--is it not partaking of the body of Christ? [And how much greater is that than partaking of the essence of some imaginary deity as some of these pagan rituals claim happens in the temples?]
 17 For we, being many people, are made to be one loaf and one body, for we are all partakers of the one bread [which is Christ].
 18 Consider physical Israel: Are not the ones who partake of the sacrifices of the altar partakers of what the altar stands for?
 19 So what am I saying? That an idol is anything real, or that food which is sacrificed to an idol has any innate power or efficacious effect if eaten? [No.]
 20-21 I'm saying that things sacrificed by Gentiles in such a manner are actually being sacrificed to demons [masquerading as gods], and not to the true God--and I do not want you to have communion with demons, for you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils, nor can you partake of the Lord's table and also the table of demons.
 22 Do we [dare] provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?
 23 "All things are lawful for me"--but all things are not necessarily good. "All things are lawful for me"--but all things don't necessarily edify.
 24 Don't selfishly worry only about your own good--concern yourself with the good of others!
 25 Whatever is sold in the marketplace, go ahead and eat, asking nothing about its background for the sake of your conscience.
 26 **For the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.**
 27 If an unbeliever invites you to dinner, go if you want to, and eat what he gives you. But ask nothing about the background of the food for the sake of your conscience.
 28 However, if any man tells you, "This was sacrificed to idols," don't eat it for his sake, and for the sake of conscience [--for again: **The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof**].
 29-30 When I say "Conscience," I don't mean your own, but that of your host. Now you might ask: "Why should my freedom be regulated by someone else's conscience? For if the grace of God permits *me* to partake of this sort of food, why should I be criticized over that for which I give thanks?"
 31 Well, the actual issue is that whether you eat, drink, or do something else, you should make sure it is done to the glory of God.
 32-33 Don't be a stumbling block to anyone: Either Jews, Gentiles, or the church of God, just as I accommodate everyone in what *I* do, not seeking my own good [or convenience], but the good of many other people, in hope they can be saved.

1. This Baptism into Moses was one of seven general baptisms mentioned in the Scripture. The seven include:

1. *Baptism in the cloud.*
2. *Baptism in the sea.*
3. *John's Baptism of repentance.*
4. *Baptism of fire.*
5. *Baptism into Messiah.*
6. *Baptism of suffering.*
7. *Baptism of the Holy Spirit.*

- Of these, only number five is associated with salvation; and ultimately this form of baptism, while there is a physical expression of it, comes through faith and not through the act of dipping in water.
2. Here we have absolute proof that the Bible does not contain all historic facts about the faith. Nowhere in the Scripture is there any mention of the rock of Exodus 17 literally following the camp of Israel, but Jewish oral tradition asserts that this rock rolled along behind the Israelites during their sojourn, and thus Paul confirms the validity of extra-biblical oral tradition in some matters of history. Paul here also seems to be saying that the rock was an appearance of Christ. Most assume he is saying that it only represented Christ, but the Greek literally says that the rock **“was the Christ.”** Note also that the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 reveals that **“rock”** is a euphemism for God or a deity.
3. **“Play”** would be best understood as committing idolatrous acts, and not a reference to sexual immorality, which also occurred.
4. An apparent contradiction to Num. 25, which lists 24,000 victims. This could be attributable to Paul’s recalling the number from memory (people didn’t carry Bibles for handy reference back then); or his quoting a source which may have rounded the number down instead of up; or he is not including any Egyptians in the camp who may have died in the event, but only the Hebrews; or he is not including 1,000 leaders of the rebellion who may have been executed (Num. 25:4).
5. Paul’s point in the last few verses is to admonish the Corinthians to gird up their loins and show a lifestyle acceptable to God, lest He cast them away as happened to the Israelites in question. Certainly, it militates against the “Once saved, always saved” doctrine.
6. Paul is not contradicting what he wrote in Chapter 8 about sitting at meat in an idol’s temple. Instead, he is admonishing the Corinthians not to mix idolatry with their Christian faith by worshipping Christ while also making sacrifices to other deities, a common practice of merchants and farmers in that day. It should also be noted that some pagan rituals had a doctrine similar to the Christian Eucharist. Someone who ate a food offering to some gods was believed to be partaking of that god in some fashion and receiving benefits from it. In no way does this relegate the Christian doctrine of the Eucharist to a pagan ritual, for the concept to some degree was taught in the Old Testament. Also, Paul (arguably) has been touting Eucharistic benefits to his readers.
7. This could be written as: **“All things are lawful for me.” But all things are not expedient. “All things are lawful for me.” But all things edify not.”**
8. Better paraphrased as: *“Don’t selfishly worry only about your own good--concern yourself with the good of others.”*
9. The Christian is instructed not to eat in this case to make a statement to the unbeliever that his gods are false.
10. A re-admonishment to live and act temperately so as not to give the faith a bad reputation among those who otherwise might be open to receive the message of the Gospel. Even so, Paul understood that some people would denounce the faith no matter what, and he did not waste time on them.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

- 1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.
- 2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances,¹ as I delivered them to you.
- 3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.
- 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.²
- 5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.
- 6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.
- 7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.
- 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.
- 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.
- 10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.³
- 11 Nevertheless neither is the man without⁴ the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.
- 12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.
- 13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?
- 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?
- 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

- 1 You should all follow my example even as I follow Christ’s.
- 2 And I praise you, brethren, that you remember all the things I told you, and you are keeping the ordinances [regarding worship] in the way that I gave them to you.
- 3 But I would point out to you that Christ is the authority over every man, and the authority over the wife is the husband, and the authority over Christ is God.
- 4 So every man who prays or prophesies with something over his head [--especially if it reflects some earthly authority--] dishonors Christ, his true authority.
- 5 And every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered [in the manner of a prostitute] dishonors her [husband, who is her authority]. This is as bad as if she were a woman with a shaved head [marking her as an adulteress]!
- 6 So if the wife isn’t covered, let her hair be shaved off as well! And if it is shameful for a woman to have a masculine hair style or to have a shaved head--well, then let her cover herself up [as is proper for a woman]!
- 7 For a man should not hide *his* head with a veil, because he is the image and glory of God. But in the case of women, they are the glory of man.
- 8 For [in the beginning,] the man did not come from the woman, but the woman came out of the man.
- 9 Nor was the man created for the woman, but the woman was created to assist the man.
- 10 This is why the woman should have a sign of authority upon her head. [Remember, the angels are watching what goes on among you.]
- 11 Even so, neither men nor women exist independent of each other in the Lord.
- 12 For even though the woman first came out of a man, men have come out of women since that time, but all things come from God.
- 13 You tell me--is it proper [in our society] that a woman prays with her head exposed [like a prostitute]?
- 14 [And] isn’t it only natural that if a man has a long, feminine

to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.
 16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.
 17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.
 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.
 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.
 20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.⁵
 21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.⁶
 22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.
 23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:
 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.
 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.
 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.
 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation⁷ to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.⁸
 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.⁹
 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.
 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.
 33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.¹⁰
 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

hair style [like a male prostitute], it is a disgrace?
 15 But if a woman has long hair, it is something she can be proud of, for her hair is given her for a covering.
 16 If anyone has problems with these points, neither we, nor the churches of God, have any other custom.
 17 Now--here's something I *do not* praise you for: When you assemble for worship, you don't come together for the better, but apparently for the worse.
 18 First of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there are cliques among you, and it doesn't surprise me.
 19 For it's unavoidable that there would be factions among the congregation, that those truly approved of by God should stand out from those who are not.
 20 When you assemble in one place, it is [apparently] not to eat the *Lord's* Supper.
 21 [I say this because] when you eat, each one rushes to eat his own food up without sharing with someone else who is hungry, while someone else gets drunk.
 22 What? You don't have your own houses to eat and drink in? Or do you disrespect the church of God and shame those who are poor? What shall I say about this? Shall I praise you over this? Well, I will not praise you.
 23 For the Lord revealed to me what I passed on to you: The same night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, he took bread,
 24 And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: "Take and eat, for this is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
 25 In the same way, he also took the cup after eating, and said, "This cup is the New covenant in my blood. Drink it, and as often as you partake of it, do it in remembrance of me."
 26 For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he returns.
 27 Because of this, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord!
 28 But let a man examine himself, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup.
 29 For he who eats and drinks in a state of unworthiness, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, because he does not recognize the fact he is eating and drinking the Lord's [holy] body [and blood]!
 30 This is why many have fallen weak and sick among you--and a number have even died!
 31 For if we would regularly examine ourselves [and correct our misbehavior], we would not be judged.
 32 But when we reap a penalty for what we have been judged guilty of, the Lord punishes us so that we do not receive the condemnation and punishment coming to the [unbelieving] world.
 33 Therefore, brethren, when you come together to eat, treat it like a potluck and wait for one another [making sure to share what you have].
 34 And if any man is too hungry to share, then let him eat at home so you don't wind up coming together in a manner that brings condemnation. The rest we need to deal with, I will get to when I come there.

1. "Ordinances" should be understood as oral traditions of the faith and instructions for communal worship.

2. Here, in verses 2 through 15, some false doctrines arise that Paul is criticizing men's hair length, along with rebuking a man who has some sort of hat on. This is basically untrue. All Jewish men prayed with their heads covered by some sort of head covering (akin to what some Eastern Moslems of today still wear), and not to do so was tantamount to being disrespectful to God. Though verse 7 does make mention of a man's head being veiled, it simply cannot be that Paul is overturning universal Jewish decorum in worship. Were Paul actually suggesting that Jews should abandon covering their heads with some traditional garb, he would be flying in the face of basic Jewish propriety, and opening himself to the very sort of criticism he just boasted of avoiding in the last chapter. Paul's rebuke about men having a head covering--the words translated "**head covered**" literally mean "**down on head**"--

most likely traces itself to criticizing a man who deliberately hides his head with a covering in some manner (perhaps to keep from being recognized as a believer by outsiders); or it may be have some relation to verse 14, where Paul rebukes men, not for hair length, but for having a feminine hair style. If this is the case, it may refer to some sort of worldly head adornment rather than a specific head covering. It certainly cannot be an indictment against any and all coverings for the head, and in any event traces itself to a cultural prohibition that does not necessarily apply in the world of today or in cultures where it would be deemed disrespectful for a man not to be wearing some sort of head covering in normal life.

When Paul speaks of men having **"long hair,"** he is referring to local temples that employed male homosexual prostitutes who sported feminine hairstyles. The Greek word translated as **"long hair"** refers to having such a hairstyle, and is a direct reference to the coiffures that marked these men as male prostitutes. (By the way, *King James* had hair longer than most rock stars!) Female prostitutes, meanwhile, were known for walking about without wearing veils or shawls to advertise what they were. Paul's concern was that no one mistake Christians for pagans, which in that culture could occur because of dress and hairstyle. Thus, these admonitions are entirely cultural, and so do not apply in our day and age. The principal, however, would apply today in the sense of admonishing Christian women not to come to church looking like various media personalities and entertainers.

Past that, Paul's noting Christ is the **"head"** of believers is crucial when considering their imputed righteousness. This goes back to the Fall when Eve ate the fruit.

In relation to this, I once posed a question to some pastors as to whether Mankind would have needed a Savior if Adam had not eaten but only Eve did. They said, No, Mankind would *not* have needed a Savior because sin entered the world through **"one man,"** namely Adam; Eve wasn't the cause of Man's fallen state.

But what about *Eve*, I asked? Would *she* have needed a Savior even if her children didn't? She did eat, after all, and so sinned.

They weren't so sure, but supposed that she did, though they weren't certain who would have crucified Jesus for her.

I then told them Eve actually *didn't* need a Savior either because Adam was her spiritual head, and even though she sinned, his righteousness still covered her, and we knew that by the fact she didn't know she was naked until *he* ate, and the fact *that* act caused sin to enter the world!

So too with us--the righteousness of our **"head,"** Christ, continuously covers and insulates us from the eternal penalty and effects of sin as Adam's did his wife when she willingly transgressed.

3. Jewish belief held that the angels were very concerned with God's being worshipped properly, and God constantly had to dissuade them from destroying men for even the slightest faults.

4. **"Without"** should be understood as: "Existing independently from."

5. In contrast to the way much of Christianity views Sunday worship, Paul reveals his focus on worship was to partake of the Lord's Supper rather than simply gather to sing hymns, and preach.

6. As noted, the early Christian worship services were nothing like we have today. Basically, they had a potluck, with fellowship and Bible teaching thrown in, finishing with partaking of the Eucharist. A problem that cropped up, as Paul refers to, is that people were more interested in enjoying a good meal than they were in Christian fellowship or the Eucharist.

7. **"Damnation"** is far too strong a word; it should be translated: **"Condemnation"** or **"judgment"** (whether light or heavy).

8. It is mind-boggling to me that, in its zeal to condemn Catholicism in favor of more biblical Christianity, Protestantism denies a central truth of Scripture: that the bread and wine--however it's accomplished--either change, or else have the presence of Christ come alongside them, which makes the elements far more than normal bread and wine. This belief that the Lord's Supper is nothing more than a memorial, with no supernatural aspects to it, was not a part of Christian belief until the Reformation.

9. I can count on one hand the number of evangelicals I know who really believe this verse (though everyone pays lip service to it). Take Communion unworthily (that is, with unrepentant sin in one's life, or in a flippant manner) and one may literally die for the act. Maybe not on the spot, ala Annianus and Sapphira, but perhaps down the line with cancer someone might otherwise not have gotten. In any event, it is impossible to accept this verse as being true on one hand, while relegating Communion to nothing more than taking normal bread and grape juice (!) as a memorial act on the other. Perhaps Christianity should be glad that the most Protestants deny the reality of the Body and Blood, for were they actually intending to partake of a true Eucharist in their services, instead of participating in what they view as only a memorial act, undoubtedly there would be quite a few less members in their churches since there are some, according to Paul, who die for not taking Communion in full recognition of what it is!

10. Though often presumed that Paul is referring to taking Communion here, he seems more to be referring to the Love Feast.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts¹, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.
 2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.
 3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.²
 4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.
 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.
 7 But the manifestation³ of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.
 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom⁴; to another the word of knowledge⁵ by

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

1 Now regarding the subject of the Holy Spirit's operation in the church, I do not want you brethren to lack knowledge.
 2 You know that you were once pagans, deceived into worshipping idols that cannot speak.
 3 I thus want you to understand that no one speaking an utterance from the Spirit of God ever says something like, "Jesus is accursed!" Nor can any spirit but the Holy Spirit speak supernaturally through a man, and proclaim, "Jesus is Lord!"
 4 Now there are different gifts the Spirit bestows, but there is only one Spirit behind these.
 5 And there are different ways to serve within the church, but the same Lord.
 6 There are also different [Charismatic] effects displayed in the church and congregation, but the same God is energizing all of it.
 7 However, when there is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit through someone, it is meant to edify [the entire church].

the same Spirit;
 9 To another faith⁶ by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing⁷ by the same Spirit;
 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy⁸; to another discerning of spirits⁹; to another divers kinds of tongues¹⁰; to another the interpretation of tongues;¹¹
 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.
 12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.
 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,¹² whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.
 14 For the body is not one member, but many.
 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?
 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?
 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?
 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.
 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?
 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.
 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:
 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.
 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:
 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.
 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.
 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.
 28 And God hath set some in the church,¹³ first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.
 29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?
 30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?¹⁴
 31 But covet earnestly the best gifts¹⁵: and yet

8 One might receive supernatural wisdom regarding an issue; another may receive supernatural knowledge about a situation by the same Holy Spirit;
 9 Another may receive supernatural faith [to deliver or receive miracles] by the same Holy Spirit; another may receive the talent or miraculous ability to perform physical healings by the same Holy Spirit;
 10 Another might receive the power to work miracles; another might speak a prophetic utterance; another may have the gift to distinguish the anointing behind teaching or prophecy [whether it is of God or Satan]; another may receive the ability to speak or interpret an utterance in Tongues.
 11 But all these wonderful things come through the operation of the one Holy Spirit who divides them up amongst the members of the community as He chooses.
 12 For as a body has many separate parts, but the sum of those parts is one body, so also is Christ.
 13 And by one Spirit we were baptized into one body, be we Jews or Gentiles, slave or free--and we were all given the same Spirit to drink of.
 14 For the human body is not made up of one part, but is made up of many parts.
 15 If our foot, for instance, were to say "I am not a part of the body because I am a foot and not a hand"--isn't it still a part of the body?
 16 And if the ear were to say, "Because I am not an eye, I don't count as a part of the body"--would that make it any less a body part?
 17 If the whole body were an eye, how would it hear? If the whole body was made for hearing, how could it smell?
 18 But God has now arranged the different members of the body [of Christ] as it has pleased Him.
 19 And if they were all the same organ, where would the rest of the body be?
 20 But the way things are arranged, the many different parts of the body make up one single body.
 21 So the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" any more than the head can say, "I don't need you!" to the feet.
 22 No, in fact, the parts of the body that seem most helpless are still very important.
 23 And the parts of our body we think to be the least honorable, we, in fact, bestow the greatest honor [by hiding them from view], and treat with special attention.
 24 For nothing needs to be done to the attractive parts of us, but God has made the body so that the most honor goes to the parts that lack the beauty that other parts have,
 25 So that no part of the body is somehow more important than the other, but that the various body parts are, in one way or another, equal in importance and have an equal care for other body parts.
 26 And if one part of the body suffers, all the parts of the body suffer with it. Likewise, if one part of the body is honored, all the parts of the body rejoice with it.
 27 Now you all are the body of *Christ*, and each of you is an important part of his body.
 28 And here are some of the parts of that body which God has placed in the church: First, apostles. Second, prophets. Third, teachers. After these, those who can do miracles; those with gifts of healing; those who can help other people; those who can give direction to the church in practical and business matters; and those who speak in Tongues.
 29 Now--are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers or able to work miracles?

shew I unto you a more excellent way.

30 Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all speak in Tongues?
Do all interpret Tongues? [No.]

31 But you should earnestly covet the greater gifts the Spirit offers. And, good as that may be, here is something even better to do:

1. Right here, thanks to the intervention of man, a false doctrine has crept into much of the church that this chapter is talking about “the nine Gifts of the Spirit.” There is no such thing as the *nine Gifts of the Spirit*! The word “**gifts**” was placed here by human translators, and is where this notion came from. What follows are not “Spiritual Gifts” but rather various ‘**manifestations**’ of the Holy Spirit as clearly shown in verse 7! It’s true that anything that comes from God is a gift of sorts, but altering the classification of what is actually an evidence of the Spirit gives birth to error, superseding what Paul actually says are the “**gifts**” from God in Ephesians 4:7-13 (those gifts being people or offices in the church), and instead elevating the manifestation of the Spirit’s power and presence into the “true gifts” of God. Verse 1 could actually be translated as: “**Concerning spirituals, brethren, I am unwilling for you to lack understanding.**”

2. This appears to be a reference regarding speaking prophetically in the church. This was critically important in the case of the Corinthians, who had grown up in an environment where false prophecy and demonic manifestations were commonplace. Paul, acknowledging elsewhere in his letters that false prophets would creep into the church, reveals that the Spirit had seen to it that godly men with a gift would be able to discern the truth of God from that of demonic sources, some of which apparently gave rise to false prophets infiltrating the community and, perhaps under demonic anointing, prophesying that Jesus was cursed of God as a false prophet.

3. The next verses go on to describe not “gifts” but the “**manifestation**” of the Spirit during worship.

4. This manifestation of the Spirit is pretty straightforward, referring to God’s giving a person a revelation of wisdom in discerning what has caused, or is behind, a problem in the church.

5. Not necessarily some sort of revelation that there is a person in the audience with a back problem—although that can fall within the parameters. This generally refers to receiving the wisdom on how to deal with a problem at hand.

6. Always ignored by some teachers who hold to the false doctrine that faith plays no part in God’s willingness or ability to move in one’s life, because He is sovereign and will do what He wants. In fact, this refers to God’s granting supernatural faith either to accomplish, or receive, a miracle. Does that substantiate the notion that “faith is a spiritual force”? The answer is *yes*, only if that faith comes as a supernatural gift from God rather than through the carnal efforts of a person’s positive thinking and confession. It should also be noted that while miracles are also listed as a manifestation of the Spirit in verse 10, these miracles are not necessarily based on the minister’s faith, but rather are something God does independent of that (Acts 5:15).

7. The word here for “**gifts**” could actually refer to a talent for using natural methods to heal, rather than supernatural, miraculous healings, which would fall under the category of miracles.

8. “**Prophecy**” is understood in different ways. In the Charismatic realm, it’s usually understood as standing up and saying, “Thus saith the Lord.” Although that appears to be the correct understanding of the word in the context of this chapter, it also refers to an ability to edify and exhort the Body of Christ.

9. The ability either to discern true teaching from false, or to supernaturally discern the presence and operation of demons.

10. Just as *prophecy* refers to two different things, so too *Tongues* refers here to more than one thing. In the context of this chapter, it refers not to some human language the speaker doesn’t know, but rather to a prophetic pronouncement spoken in either a true language or in a heavenly tongue.

11. Not necessarily giving an English translation of apparent gibberish, but also an ability to elaborate on a prophetic word given by someone in their normal language, and to explain its meaning or message.

12. This ‘**baptism into one body**’ is that which comes through faith in Messiah, and not by water baptism.

13. The hierarchical structure of the early church is listed here. Curiously, not just offices, but rather categories of talents, are included in this list, suggesting that the most important talents a person may employ in the church include healing, helping others*, assisting in the smooth operation of the church (the word for “**governments**” comes from a Latin word to steer a ship), and the use of Tongues.

* “**Helps**” is a word that means to under gird a ship with ropes to assist in keeping the hull from collapsing under stress (Acts 27:17).

14. The answer to this rhetorical question is that *no*, all *do not* speak in Tongues, work miracles, etc.

15. Use of the word “**gifts**” here is used to justify its insertion in verse 1.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels¹, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,² and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

1 Even though I could miraculously speak in the tongues of mankind and those of the angels, if I don’t have [God’s sort of unselfish] love in my heart, my gift is no more useful than someone blowing a horn or clashing two cymbals together.

2 And even if I had the gift of prophecy, and had perfect understanding of all mysteries; and though I had all knowledge; and though I had so much faith that I could move mountains—if I do not have [God’s sort of unselfish] love in my heart, I am nothing.

3 Even if I give everything I own to feed the poor; and even if I give my body over to be burned at the stake, but do not have [God’s sort of unselfish] love—it profits me nothing.

4 [God’s sort of unselfish] love is patient, kind, does not envy

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
 8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.³
 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.
 10 But when that which is perfect is come,⁴ then that which is in part shall be done away.
 11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.
 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.⁵
 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

others. It does not boast of itself, nor promote itself.

5 [God's sort of unselfish] love does not behave improperly. It does not seek its own good [but that of others]. It is not provoked, and does not hold grudges for past wrongs.

6 It does not take pleasure in unrighteousness, but instead rejoices in truth.

7 It bears up under all pressure. It looks on the positive side. It is confident in every circumstance. It endures all that comes its way.

8 [God's sort of unselfish] love will never end. But where things like prophecies are present, *they* will someday come to an end. So, too, Tongues will cease. Even [human] knowledge will vanish away.

9 For we understand some things, and prophecy helps us understand other things.

10 But when the Messianic Age has fully come, then the state in which we only have partial knowledge will be done away with.

11 When I was a child, I spoke like one, and had the understanding of one. But after I grew up, I laid aside the things of childhood.

12 You see, in this present age, it's like looking at ourselves in a foggy mirror--we can't see ourselves clearly. But in the Messianic Age, I shall know Christ as he truly is, even as he now knows me and what I am [and will be].

13 And these things will always exist: Faith, hope and [God's sort of unselfish] love. And the greatest of these is [God's sort of unselfish] love.

1. A clear substantiation that Tongues is not limited to known human languages.

2. Although speaking hyperbolically, Paul does confirm here that with enough faith the miracle power of God can be appropriated. While that notion opens up a can of worms that space here is insufficient to address, it certainly calls into question the notion of those who teach that faith is limited to being some nebulous "Channel of trust between man and God."

3. Many in Christianity use this, and the following two verses, to make the claim that the miracle power of the Spirit (i.e., "Spiritual Gifts") ceased when the canon of Scripture was completed. This false notion is a good example of Christianity twisting the Scriptures to explain away its shortcomings and refusal to believe what God said was not just for the apostles, but also for the generations that would arise after them (Acts 2:39). The word "**perfect**" means "**complete**."

4. This refers to the fullness of the Messianic Kingdom, not the canon of Scripture. Even today, with the whole canon of Scripture, we do not have full knowledge of those Scriptures, but must speculate on some things that are not clearly explained.

5. A clear indication that Paul is not referring to Scripture, but to the Resurrection. The words, "**But then shall I know even as also I am known**" could be paraphrased as: "*But in the Messianic Age, I shall know Christ as he truly is, even as he now knows me and what I am [and will be].*"

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 14

1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts¹, but rather that ye may prophesy.
 2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him;² howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.
 3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.
 4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.
 5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.³
 6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?
 7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 14

1 Pursue [God's sort of unselfish] love, and desire Spiritual things--and in particular, that you can prophesy.
 2 For a person who speaks in a Tongue does not speak to other people, but instead to God, since no one understands the words he speaks, seeing that through his spirit he utters mysterious things.
 3 But someone who prophesies speaks to other people in order to edify, exhort, and comfort them.
 4 A person who speaks in a Tongue does build *himself* up, but someone who prophesies builds up the whole church.
 5 While I wish you could all speak in Tongues, I wish even more that you all had the ability to prophesy, for a person who prophesies is more important than someone who speaks in Tongues--unless that person is given the ability to translate what he saying so that everyone in the church can be built up.
 6 Now, brethren, what good would it do for you if I came to you, speaking in Tongues? Wouldn't it be better if I spoke normally to you, imparting some revelation or bit of knowledge? Or wouldn't it be better if I prophesied to you, or else delivered some doctrine?
 7 [This illustration might help explain what I mean:] Take normal lifeless music instruments like the flute or harp. Unless

distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts¹, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.⁴

16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.⁵

21 In the law⁶ it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.⁷

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues,⁸ and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

24 But if all prophesy,⁹ and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.¹⁰

26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a

a real tune is actually played on them, how will anyone know what the performer is doing?

8 If a Roman legion, for instance, hears a strange blast from a trumpeter, how will the men know what to do in battle [--whether to assemble, fight, or retreat]?

9 In the same way, unless you utter words anyone can understand, no one will know what you are saying, for you're speaking into the wind.

10 Now there are many different languages in the world, each unique.

11 But if I don't know the language, both the speaker and I will be like foreigners to each other.

12 Keeping this in mind, since you greatly desire the movement of the Spirit among you, make your emphasis that which builds up the church.

13 Thus, someone who speaks in a Tongue should pray that he be given the ability to translate what he is saying.

14 For if I pray in a Tongue, my spirit prays while my mind is put on hold.

15 So what will I do? I will pray with the spirit, *and* I will also pray with my normal understanding, just as I will sing in the spirit, *and* with my normal understanding.

16 If you don't do this, when you say a blessing through your spirit, how will someone sitting in the place of a normal person be able to say "Amen," given the fact that he doesn't know what you're saying?

17 For you may be giving thanks--and that's fine--but the other person is not built up [if you're doing this through speaking in Tongues].

18 Now I thank my God that I speak in Tongues more than any of you.

19 But inside the church, I would rather speak five words everyone understands--so that I can teach something--rather than ten thousand words in a Tongue, which no one understands.

20 Brethren, don't be childlike in your understanding [of spiritual things], although you should be as innocent as children when it comes to evil, yet wise as sages [when it comes to spiritual matters].

21 In the Torah, it is written: **With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people...yet for all that will they not hear me**, saith the Lord.

22 So then Tongues are a sign not to believers, but to unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers, but believers.

23 If therefore the whole church assembles in one place, and an unbeliever, or a man who doesn't know what Tongues is, comes in and sees everyone speaking in Tongues--won't he think you're all insane [since you're speaking gibberish to him]?

24 But if everyone happened to be prophesying, and an unbeliever or unlearned man came in, he would be confronted by what he was observing, and all the things he sees would cause conviction to fall upon him.

25 Thus, the secrets of his heart will be revealed, and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and testify that He is certainly among you.

26 In view of this, brethren, how is it that when you assemble, everyone at the same time seems to want to deliver a song, teach a doctrine, speak in a Tongue, impart a revelation, give an interpretation of a Tongue, etc.? [These things are great to do, but] let them all be done in a way that edifies everyone.

27 If anyone speaks in a Tongue, let it be by two, or at most,

doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.
 27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.¹¹
 28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.
 29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.¹²
 30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.
 31 For ye may all prophesy one by one,¹³ that all may learn, and all may be comforted.
 32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.¹⁴
 33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.
 34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.¹⁵
 35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.¹⁶
 36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?¹⁷
 37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.
 38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.
 39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.
 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

three--and these in order, one after another. Then let someone with an ability to interpret, translate.
 28 And if there is no interpreter present [then obviously this message is not meant for the church, so] the speaker should keep silent in the church and speak to himself, and to God.
 29 Let those who speak prophetically speak two or three [at a time], and let the others there judge [its meaning, and if the message is of God].
 30 Meanwhile, if another person sitting there receives something else to give while someone else is speaking, let the speaker keep silent [and allow the new speaker to talk].
 31 For *all* of you may prophesy, one by one, so that everyone can learn, and be comforted.
 32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,
 33 For God is not a God of disorder, but of harmony, as is the case in all churches of the righteous.
 34 Tell the wives in the church to keep silent during the service, for it is not permissible for them to speak [and interrupt things]. They are to be in subjection to their husbands, as also the Torah says [in Genesis 3:16].
 35 So if they have some question, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a wife to speak out [and interrupt worship].
 36 [If you resent all these things I've been telling you, and think you know better, let me ask you again:] Did the Message of God originate with you and go out to others *from* you; or did it originate with others and simply come *to* you?
 37 If anyone among you considers himself to be a prophet, or else thinks himself spiritual, let him acknowledge the things I have been saying are directives from the Lord.
 38 [If anyone won't recognize this as truth, then let him not be recognized by the community.]
 39 So, brethren, covet to prophesy, and don't stop people from speaking in Tongues.
 40 But for goodness' sake, let everything be done decently, and in order!

1. Again, "gifts" is not in the original text, but was added. "Desire spiritual things" is a better translation.

2. More indication that Tongues is not limited to known human languages.

3. Here, and in the verses to come, Paul addresses a problem the Corinthian church seemed to be having with Tongues. Apparently, they were so enamored with the experience that their meetings were getting out of hand and perhaps becoming 'overly Pentecostal.'

4. Here, Paul reveals that he perceived Tongues as a vehicle for prayer and worship.

5. Better paraphrased as: "Brethren, don't be childlike in your understanding of spiritual things, although you should be as innocent as children when it comes to sin, yet wise as sages when it comes to Spiritual matters."

6. "The Law" is a term for the whole of the Old Testament, not just for the Torah of Moses. Beyond that, some love to belabor the point that, "Scripture must *always* be taken in context." Well, this is entirely untrue, as we see here with Paul who takes Isaiah 28:11 wildly out of context. The verse actually refers to Israel being brought into the captivity of foreign enemies. Contrary to what some claim, the Scriptures often do have meanings out of their direct context. In fact, some Jews use this very point to "prove" the fallaciousness of the New Testament by showing its writers take verses out of their direct Old Testament context to justify their own theology.

7. Having earlier confirmed that someone praying in Tongues edifies himself, he then makes this odd statement about Tongues being a sign to unbelievers. This seems to suggest that Tongues being used during a public worship service is for the benefit of those present who may not be Christians, although we cannot be dogmatic on that since Paul also speaks of prophesying being for the benefit of believers, yet he shows its use as a testimony for unbelievers. Both may be for the benefit for unbeliever and believer alike.

8. An interesting point that seems to acknowledge that Tongues was typical for believers, not merely a "gift" that occasionally manifested.

9. "Prophecy" has a multi-faceted meaning: Paul is first of all speaking theoretically, as if everyone were to get up and say, "Thus saith the Lord." But he is also referring to it as a public testimony of sorts as to the work God has been doing in the lives of the church. "All" have the ability to testify even if they lack the ability to prophesy in the greater sense. Prophecy can also refer to having in depth understanding of the things in Scripture (see 13:2).

10. Verse 25 refers to prophecy in the sense of supernatural revelation, not merely to testifying and speaking words of encouragement.

11. Wrongly used by some to make the claim that this admonition to the Corinthians is equally valid for us today, completely ignoring the fact that gatherings in this day consisted of 10-20 adults meeting in homes. To say this applies equally to a gathering of 1,000+ people in a church of today is unwarranted. In fact, were we to treat the text as giving the percentage of people in a group

who may permissibly use Tongues in a public setting, we could make the claim that 200-300 people in a large church of today could theoretically fall within the parameters of Paul's words here.

Also, if the legalistic interpretation of Paul's words is correct, then we must also rebuke the Holy Spirit for getting out of order at Pentecost and having up to 120 people (or, at minimum, 12) using Tongues in a public setting when only 2 or 3 is permissible!

12. Notice that Paul does not appear to hold to the legalistic doctrine that a prophet must be correct 100% of the time or he is a false prophet. While this was true in the Old Testament when one stood in the office of a prophet (with a capital "P"), a New Testament believer instead stands only in the *role* of a prophet, and in this case such a requirement is not imposed upon him, for there is a difference between the Old Testament prophetic anointing, and a New Testament manifestation of the Spirit, in which a believer is moved to make a prophetic pronouncement. Notice here that while Paul calls for the utterance to be judged as to its validity, nowhere does he go on to say that if it is judged to be false, the one giving it is to be marked as a false prophet. Instead, he seems to understand that New Testament prophecy is no longer a science, but an art.

13. Again, this has a dual meaning. The first is that true prophetic words can be given one at a time by those having them. The second use refers to testifying, which everyone may do when appropriate.

14. This may, or may not, refer to someone with a prophetic word being able to "hold it in" until it can be given at a proper time, but could refer to judging prophetic words by the Scriptures as to their validity. "**Spirits**," in this context, could theoretically mean the revelations or prophecies received by those in the church.

15. As shown in the next verse, this admonition to women is not a general command to keep their mouths shut during church because of their gender, but instead a rebuke for some who were speaking during the teaching or testimony, asking their husbands what the things being said meant. The churches at this point in time may, as did the synagogues, have had men and women sit separately, and so wives with questions may have been shouting from the back of the room to their husbands.

16. Meaning to disrupt by speaking out at an inopportune time. This certainly is not saying that women are forbidden to otherwise participate equally with men in praying or prophesying, which Paul referred to earlier in the book.

17. Paul, as he did in 1 Cor. 4:7, is sarcastically saying something along the lines of, "Were you people the ones who were commissioned to send the Gospel out to others, or did others bring it to you?!" In other words, some in the Corinthian church were arrogantly placing themselves on par with the apostles, and disputing some of their commands.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 15

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.¹

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas², then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred³ brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.⁴

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles,⁵ that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.⁶

11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 15

1 Additionally, brethren, I would like to reiterate the key foundations of the Gospel I told you of earlier, which you accepted and now stand in.

2 And it is through these truths that you are saved, provided you keep what I preached to you ever in your mind--assuming you agree you have not followed mere fables [since there seems to be uncertainty in some of your minds].

3 I told you first what was most important, a truth I had also been told and believed: That Christ died for our sins, fulfilling what the Scriptures foretold.

4 And that he was buried, and arose three days later, again fulfilling what the Scriptures foretold.

5 And that he was seen by Cephas [Peter], then by the twelve apostles as a whole.

6 After this, he was seen by more than five hundred of the brethren at once, most of whom are still alive to this day, though some have passed on.

7 Then he appeared to James, and then again to all the apostles.

8 Finally, I saw him as well--in the sense, one might say, as a child born prematurely. [Meaning my supernatural deliverance from unbelief is an example of what God will do with unbelieving Israel in some future time.]

9 For I am the least of the apostles, and unworthy even to be called by that title because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But through the grace of God, I am what I am--an apostle! And the grace God bestowed upon me was not wasted, for I labored harder than all the other apostles put together, though it was not truly I who labored, but the grace of God within me.

11 But whether I preached or they preached--we all preached the same message, and you believed [it]!

12 Now if the core of our message is that Christ was raised from the dead, how is it that some of you deny there will be a resurrection of the dead?

13 If there is no resurrection, then Christ is not raised.

14 And if Christ is not raised, then we're preaching for

preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.
 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.
 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:
 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.⁷
 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.
 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.
 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.
 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.⁸
 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.⁹
 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.
 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.
 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.
 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.
 29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?¹⁰ why are they then baptized for the dead?
 30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?
 31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
 32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus,¹¹ what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.
 33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.¹²
 34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.
 35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?
 36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:
 37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:
 38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.
 39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is

nothing, and your faith is pointless.
 15 More than that, we are found to be lying in the name of God, for we have reported on behalf of God that He raised up Christ--which is obviously impossible if the dead are not raised up.
 16 For if the dead are not raised up, then Christ is not raised up.
 17 And if Christ was not resurrected, then your faith is pointless, and you are still bearing the burden and penalty for your sins.
 18 Those who have died as believers in Christ are also dead and without hope.
 19 If Christ can do no good for us in other than *this* life, we are the most pathetic of all men.
 20 But now Christ *is* risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of all who have died.
 21 For since by one man death came into the world, by one man also came the resurrection from the dead.
 22 For as in Adam all men are bound to die, even so in Christ shall all of us be resurrected.
 23 But we shall all rise in turn. Christ first, because he is the firstfruits; and after him at his coming, each man in the order he was born [though this will all transpire in the blink of an eye from our frame of reference].
 24 Then will come the end of things, when he shall deliver the kingdom to God the Father after he has overthrown every system, ruler and [spirit entity] not in subjection to him.
 25 For Christ must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.
 26 And the last enemy to be put down and rendered powerless will be death.
 27 For God has put all things under Christ's feet. But when it is said that, "All things are under his feet," it is obvious that does not include God, who is the one who *put* all things under Christ's feet [by giving him absolute authority over all things].
 28 And after everything is [fully] made subject to Christ, then shall the Son also be subject to Him who put all things under the Son's feet so God may be all in all.
 29 And so if there is no resurrection [which all I've just related hinges upon], why is it that some people are involved with baptism for the dead if the dead will not rise? Why would they be doing this otherwise?
 30 And why do we always face danger and persecution on an hourly basis [for our stand that Christ was raised from the dead]?
 31 I swear by the pride I take in you in Christ Jesus our Lord, that I face death on a daily basis [over my preaching the resurrection].
 32 If, at Ephesus, I daily laid my life on the line like some gladiator who could die at any moment at the claws of wild beasts, what was the point of doing so if everything ends at death, and the dead have no resurrection to look forward to? We all may as well "party on" to the end then!
 33 Don't be deceived. [As Menander said in his play *Thais* about a harlot:] *Bad company will corrupt good behavior.*
 34 So *awake to righteousness, and do not sin*--and I say this to shame you into action, for some there clearly have no knowledge of God!
 35 But some man might ask, "How are the dead resurrected, and what kind of body will they have [if they've turned to bones]?"
 36 Idiot! A seed is not made alive into what it is destined to

one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.
 40 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.
 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.
 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:
 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:
 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
 45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.
 46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.
 47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.
 48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.
 49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.
 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.
 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump:¹³ for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.¹⁴
 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

be unless it first is sown into the earth, and dies.
 37 What you put in the ground is not its final form, but just a small kernel of wheat or some other grain.
 38 But God gives the seed the sort of body He wants it to have, and every seed has its own body.
 39 And all flesh is not the same: There are men, animals, fish and birds--and all their flesh is different.
 40 And there are bodies both in the heavens and on earth. But they differ in radiance, for the radiance of the heavenly bodies differs from the radiance of earthly bodies.
 41 There is one radiance of the sun, another for the moon, and another for the stars, for one star is brighter or dimmer than another.
 42 It will be the same in the resurrection: the body sown will be sown a perishable corpse, but it will be raised imperishable.
 43 It is sown in dishonor, and raised in splendor. It is sown in weakness, and raised in power.
 44 It is sown a natural body, and will be raised as a spiritual body, for there is a natural body and a spiritual one.
 45 And so it is written that the first man, Adam, was *made a "living body"*; but the last Adam was made a life-filled/life-giving *spirit*!
 46 This shows us that, in the case of humans, the body that comes first is not spiritual, but natural. The spiritual body comes afterward.
 47 The first prototype man, Adam, was born from the earth, and was earthly [in his outlook and thinking]. The second prototype man is the Lord Jesus from heaven.
 48 Unsaved people today are as is the earthly prototype man [-still earthly and carnal]. Conversely, people who come from Jesus, the heavenly man, are like *him* [in nature].
 49 And as we once naturally reflected the traits of the earthly man, so we will [someday] fully and naturally reflect the traits of the heavenly man.
 50 Now I say this, brethren: Unregenerate flesh and blood humanity cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Neither does imperfection inherit perfection.
 51 But look--I show you a wonderful mystery: Not all of us will die, but all of us will be changed.
 52 Yes, in a single moment--in the twinkling of an eye--at the "Last trump" when the *shofar* will sound and the dead arise in perfection, we too will be changed.
 53 For our imperfect bodies must be made perfect; and our mortal selves must be made immortal!
 54 So when our imperfection is clothed with perfection, and we--as mortals--put on immortality, then will come to pass what is written in the Scriptures: **Death is swallowed up in victory.**
 55 **O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**
 56 Now the poisonous sting that causes death is sin, and it is the Torah that is the very strength behind sin [for it draws sin from us like a poultice, showing the sin that is inside of us].
 57 But thanks be to God who gives us victory [over death and sin] through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be constant, immovable, and always looking to do what you can to further the Lord's work, for you know that the things you do for him are never done in vain.

1. Often used to illustrate the notion of those who "have a *said* faith, rather than a *true* faith in Christ." In this sense, Paul would be acknowledging that one might intellectually respond to the Gospel, but yet never come to true faith in Christ, and thus die in sin. If, however, one looks at this verse in the context of verse 14, we can deduce that Paul is suggesting that faith in Christ is

pointless *if*, as some of the Corinthians seem to believe, there is no resurrection, or if Christ died but did not physically resurrect. 2. Generally thought to be a name for Peter. This is not absolutely conclusive, however. Also, Paul curiously mentions Jesus being seen by “**the twelve**,” when there were only *eleven* apostles at that point. Matthias may have been present, though, and Paul could be including him in the group even though he would not formally be given that position until after Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit.

3. This was probably when He ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives.

4. We see here from verse 7 that far more than the main 12 were considered apostles, for the 12 were previously mentioned in verse 5, and now reference is made to the remainder of the apostles. It is also interesting to note that no other Scriptural reference is available recounting Jesus’ appearance to James, which is mentioned here.

5. It is encouraging to note that Paul grew in Christ just as we all. Comparing his remarks here to those in Gal. 2:6, where he points out that “*No one is more important than anyone else because God respects no man’s person,*” we see Paul has grown in humility and is now “**least of the apostles**” in his own mind.

6. We see Paul here firmly grounded at this point in comprehending that all glory goes to God for any good thing that he has been able to do in propagating the Gospel.

7. It is important to note that while some criticize other Christians for the (false) teaching that Jesus in some way atoned for our sins by spending time suffering in hell, the idea that the cross alone forensically ended what was necessary for Christ to do in order to atone for sin and pass those benefits on to us simply is untrue. There were three main requirements for Christ to fulfill in order to complete the process by which we have the opportunity for salvation:

1. Perfectly fulfill the Law during His life on earth.
2. Die upon the cross as a sacrificial offering.
3. Rise from the dead.

Remove any of these factors from the mix, and Jesus has not done all that is required for us to be freed from our sins, irrespective of what some think.

8. This is a crucially important verse showing that by Adam’s sin humanity inherited physical and spiritual death, but through Christ’s righteousness mankind now has the opportunity to inherit eternal physical and spiritual life.

9. “**All be made alive**” does not mean that all humanity automatically receives the benefits of Christ’s atonement, but rather those who receive the Gospel message. All, however, will experience resurrection and then go on to reward or punishment.

10. There has long been a debate over what Paul here is referring to about being “**baptized for the dead**.” There is a possibility that some people were undertaking some sort of proxy baptism for their dead Jewish ancestors in the thought that this was somehow efficacious for them, and the text could seem to confirm that. However, there are major problems with this notion, not the least of which is that Paul never hesitates to speak out against false beliefs and practices. Yet in *this* case, he would be commenting on a (false) Christian practice without criticizing it. Thus, if he is referring to some sort of proxy baptism, then by inference he was at least in tacit approval of it, a notion rejected by all orthodox streams of Christianity. There is another problem, in that there is no historical record, outside this one verse, of this sort of practice existing in Paul’s time. After Paul, heretical groups such as the Gnostic-Ebionite Cerinthians, and the later Marcionites, did embrace such a practice—giving Paul all the more reason to criticize such a practice in *his* time if it existed. For these reasons the author believes that Paul must be referring to a reasonably common practice that he would not have disapproved of. Such a practice, which would have been culturally acceptable, was that of the Jews baptizing a dead body prior to burial (Acts 9:37), illustrating by this custom that the body will rise again in a purified state rather than merely turning to dust with no hope of future resurrection. Paul would have had no criticism of this practice. Thus, while the text appears to suggest one thing, the author believes it is ultimately making a point about a different practice than a surface reading of the text conveys.

11. Some mistakenly think from these words that Paul was forced into some sort of gladiatorial combat by the authorities in Ephesus. However, the view of Patristic commentators was that he was speaking metaphorically of the opposition to his ministry by the worshippers of Diana. It was technically forbidden by Roman law to force a Roman citizen to fight as a gladiator.

12. Paul is repeating a line from the play *Thais*, by the dramatist Menander, esteemed in Paul’s time as the greatest Athenian playwright in Greek history.

13. The last few verses have been a continuing reiteration of the fact that there will be a resurrection. This particular verse, however, is the crowning statement to Paul’s point, showing that there must be a physical change to the physical body because there will be those who will be alive at Christ’s coming that will undergo this change without dying. The term “**last trump**,” by the way, is a reference to the Jewish Festival of *Rosh Hashanah*, which will probably herald the return of Christ in some year. *Rosh Hashanah* happens to be a two-day Festival, so it would be impossible for any man to know the precise day even if he did know the precise year. The term “the day and the hour” is yet another term associated with this Festival. It is also noteworthy that there is no real room within the theology presented here for Christians at the return of Christ to undergo Purgatory in the sense of spending a prolonged period of purification and punishment for any remaining venial sin in their lives, if for no other reason than that living people do not go to Purgatory—only the dead supposedly do.

14. Paul is referring to a critical point he later develops in Rom. 4:15 and 7:7-11: That the law—by its existence—amplifies and brings out the sin nature in a man who is exposed to it and binds himself to its authority. And as bad as all its effects are, the worst aspect of it is that it will bring out the sin of pride in mankind—a sin that technically isn’t even listed *in* the commandments! This spirit of pride was most visible in the Pharisees, who were confident in their own righteousness, and despised others. But it takes a number of different forms including unbiblical self-reliance (“*I can keep God’s Law!*”), to unbiblical self-condemnation (“*I’m just a worm of a sinner!*”), to antinomianism (“*I’m not under any Law, so I can do what I want!*”)—three totally dichotomous extremes that trace themselves to the same root of sin!

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 16

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week¹ let every one of

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 16

1 Now concerning the collection that is to be taken up for the righteous in Judea, I have the same instructions for you as I do for all the Galatian churches:

2 On Sunday [when you gather for worship], let every one of

you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.
 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.
 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.
 5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.
 6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.
 7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.
 8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.
 9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.
 10 Now if Timotheus² come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.
 11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.
 12 As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.
 13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men³, be strong.
 14 Let all your things be done with charity.
 15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)
 16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.
 17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.
 18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.
 19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.⁴
 20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.
 21 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.
 22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.
 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

you make offerings from what God has provided him so no one feels put upon to give when I arrive.
 3 And when I do arrive, I will send whatever representatives you select with letters of introduction from me to the church in Jerusalem, so they can convey your offering to the brethren there.
 4 And if it's good for me to go as well, they will accompany me to Jerusalem.
 5 I will come to you after I pass through Macedonia, for I am heading there.
 6 It may well be that I will remain even through the winter with you, and then you can wish me Godspeed on my next journey to wherever I go.
 7 I won't come right now because I don't want to come and then leave without a proper visit. I prefer to stay a while if the Lord will allow.
 8 But I will remain in Ephesus through Pentecost [May].
 9 You see, a great door of opportunity is wide open for me here, though there are many adversaries.
 10 If, however, Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to worry about, for he does the same work of the Lord as I do.
 11 Let no man thus treat him as anything other than my equal representative [despite his young age]. Treat him with respect, and conduct him back to here in peace, for I look forward to his arrival along with the other brethren.
 12 As touching our brother Apollos, I very much wished him to go and visit you with the brethren who bring you this letter, but he did not wish to come at all at this time. He will do so when he can.
 13 Keep watch, and stand firm in the faith as mature, courageous men. Be strong.
 14 Let all you do be done in a spirit of love.
 15 Now I beg you, brethren--Stephanus and his family were the firstfruits of my missionary work in Achaia [southern Greece], and they have devoted themselves to serving the righteous in any way they can.
 16 I thus ask that you honor and heed they, and those like them, who have helped in the ministry and worked alongside us.
 17 I am glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have come [and brought your letter to me]. They've helped make up for your not being able to be here to help in person.
 18 They have refreshed my spirit and yours too. Respect committed people like them.
 19 The churches in Turkey send greetings. Aquila and Priscilla, and the church that meets in their house, send their very best wishes too.
 20 All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.
 21 THE SALUTATION OF PAUL WITH MY OWN HAND.
 22 If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, may God's curse be upon him! *Come, Lord Jesus!*
 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

1. Incorrectly used to substantiate the notion that there was an intentional "change" in the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. In fact, no Jew would take up a collection on the Sabbath, period! There is no question that the Gentiles came to have their own separate day of worship on Sunday, but there is no evidence to support an intentional apostolic change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. In saying that, however, Sabbath-keeping was never required of the Gentiles! Thus, Paul is not viewing Sunday as the "new Sabbath." This verse, by the way, is the strongest verse in the Epistles suggesting tithing as a New Testament practice based on overall income as opposed to agriculture, which tithing under the Torah of Moses was generally limited to.

2. Possibly Timothy.

3. "Quit you like men" is a rendering of a single word better understood as: "Act like grown men."

4. Some manuscripts indicate Paul was residing in this household.

2nd Corinthians

This sequel to 1st Corinthians was written shortly after 1st Corinthians. Before it was composed, however, there was another letter that has been lost to us. Some believe this lost letter is contained in Chapters 10-13.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.¹

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:²

9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity³ and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

1  From Paul—an apostle of Jesus Christ by God’s will—and Timothy our brother, to the church of God at Corinth, and to all the righteous in Achaia [southern Greece]:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of all mercies, and God of all comfort,

4 Who comforts us in all our tribulation, so that we, in turn, can comfort those undergoing their own trials, sharing with them the same sort of comfort that God has given us.

5 For as we endure our own abundance of Christ’s suffering, God’s comfort and consolation are likewise there for us, in abundance, through Christ.

6 And if we are afflicted, it is for your encouragement and salvation—and is effective, in turn, to help you endure the same things we do. Or, if we are comforted, it is also for your encouragement and salvation.

7 And our confidence in you is unwavering, knowing that as you are sharing in the same sort of suffering as us, you likewise shall partake of the same comfort.

8 For we would not have you be unaware, brethren, of the trials we faced in Turkey that were so bad we nearly broke under their weight, and despaired of even surviving.

9 But we had a death sentence hanging over our heads to teach us not to rely on ourselves, but to rely on God who raises the dead.

10 God indeed delivered us from what seemed certain death, and still does—and we are confident He will continue to do so!

11 Your prayers for us play a critical role in that, so that the gift [of God’s provision] sent at the behest of many of you who pray for us, will cause many to give thanks on our behalf as well.

12 For our rejoicing is rooted in the fact that our conscience is clear, and we walk with all holiness and godly sincerity in all our dealings with the world, relying on God’s grace and not carnal human wisdom [to guide us]. We treat everyone this way, but made special emphasis on living like this with you.

13-14 We’re not writing anything too hard to read and comprehend, and I trust that you will accept and put into common practice as much of it as you understand, so that we can rejoice over each other in the Day of the Lord Jesus.

15-16 In this confidence, I was planning before to come visit so you could have a double benefit: First, by my visiting on my way to Macedonia [northern Greece]; and then again on my return from Macedonia on my way to Judea, when you could have outfitted me for the journey.

17 Since I had determined to do this, do you think I was being flippant in my plans, or that I was acting wishy-washy, as if I were the sort of person who says “yes” when I mean “no”; or “no” when I mean “yes”?

to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?⁴

18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

18 But just as God is true, so our word to you wasn't "Maybe yes" or "Maybe no."

19 For Jesus Christ--the Son of God--whom I, Silas, and Timothy preached to you, isn't a "Maybe yes/Maybe no" person--he is absolute and unwavering in his "Yes!"

20 For all the promises of God are fulfilled in him; and in him we say "Amen," thus glorifying God.

21-22 Now the One who has rooted us both in Christ, and has anointed us--is God, who has also sealed us, and given us the engagement gift of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

23 Now I call on God as a witness to my soul, that I actually put off coming to Corinth [not because I wasn't being serious about my plans, but] in order to spare you.

24 You see, we don't want to have to come as a bunch of dictators over your faith, but we are fellow laborers for your joy, since you are standing firm in faith.

1. The most difficult notion for new Christians to grasp is that--despite the adoption as sons and daughters of God, despite the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome--Christians still suffer unfairly, and God most often does not supernaturally intervene to halt it! Many believers stumble at this point and fall away from the faith, question their salvation, or doubt God's love, and the devil then uses this as a wedge to separate them from the life of God that transcends what we see, feel, and are subject to on a natural level. Here, Paul reveals that suffering is used by God to build compassion in us for others, and that He uses our own suffering to enable us to encourage others who may be going through the same thing. Yes, we all wish that the troubles of this world could be broken by hyper faith or effective prayer, but it *can* be God's will for us to suffer (1st Peter 3:17). If so, we are to suffer in faith, remaining steadfast in commitment, and avoiding the murmuring and complaining that the Hebrews constantly showed in the wilderness. Thus, those who have suffered and endured that suffering in a godly manner are used by God to help develop the maturity of other believers who may be going through the same things, but not enduring them with the same attitude that develops the fruit of patience and confidence. Paul thus understood that the constant trials he endured were for the body of Christ that he might, through his own victory over circumstance, be an example of faithfulness for them to imitate and take comfort in.

2. We see here how bad things got for Paul at times, and how God delivered him through the circumstance--but undoubtedly far later down the road than the apostle would have wished.

3. The word here is best translated along the lines of "**holiness**," or "**honesty**," not "**simplicity**."

4. Verse 17 has confused a lot of people with its language and the term "**yea yea, and nay nay**." What he's basically doing is denying a claim he was being wishy-washy by saying one thing and then apparently doing another (by delaying an earlier planned visit). Actually, Paul delayed his visit to give the Corinthians time to repent, lest he have to come and rebuke them. He wanted the Corinthians to know and understand that both his--and God's--promises were fixed and reliable, despite circumstances incorrectly suggesting otherwise.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.¹

2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.²

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

1 But I had decided to myself that I would not come again if I had to come in a somber attitude.

2 For if I grieve *you*, who is left that can make me glad except the ones whom I have caused to grieve?

3 That is why I wrote you in the tone that I did, lest when I arrived I would be made sad by the very folk who should make me glad. For I am confident that you all can, and should, share my own joy.

4 I wrote that letter in great distress, with a heavy heart and many tears, not in order to grieve you--but I wrote it so you could know the great particular love I have for you.

5 If anyone has caused grief, the grief was less to me, and more to you--so I will not belabor the point.

6 Let me just say that this man has been punished enough [by being disfellowshipped from the community].

7 So now you should not continue to heap condemnation upon him, but do the opposite, showing grace and comforting him, lest his grief consume him.

8 So I beseech you to bind yourselves to love him.

9 For I also wrote to you as I did to test you and see if you would be obedient to all you were told.

the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;³

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

14 Now thanks be unto God, which always⁴ causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?⁵

17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

10 And if you forgive something, then so do I. And if I forgave anything, the person I forgave was forgiven for your benefit by me in Christ's place as his representative.

11 This was so that Satan should not gain any sort of advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his strategies [and we know he takes advantage of unforgiveness].

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ, a door of opportunity was opened to me by the Lord,

13 But I had no rest in my spirit, because I could not find Titus, my brother. So, taking leave of them there, I went on to Macedonia.

14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in an incense-permeated Triumphal parade in Christ, with the scent of knowledge of Him displayed to all men through us everywhere we go.

15-16 For we are to God a sweet fragrance of Christ. But to them who are saved and them who are perishing we are different smells: To the latter, we are the odor of [physical and spiritual] death. To the former, we are the fragrance of [physical and spiritual] life. And who is up to take on these tasks? [Well, if no one else is, we are!]

17 For we are not like those who corrupt the Message of God [to justify personal gain] as many do. We preach the Message in sincerity, as though sent and overseen by God; and we speak in Christ's name.

1. Here, Paul further explains his delay in returning to Corinth: that he did not wish to return and have to rebuke the believers, lest both he and they be in a sour mood over the trip.

2. There is a debate over whom the person mentioned in this passage is. Most presume this was the man who was having an affair with his stepmother mentioned in 1 Cor. 5. If so, apparently he was willing to repent, but the church had anathematized him and refused his re-entry into the body. Paul would thus be saying that a truly repentant soul should be welcomed back as a brother, and restored to fellowship.

Other scholars take the view that Paul is referring to one of his antagonists who apparently had repented of his opposition after being disfellowshipped. The rationale for this view lies in the fact that there is a lost letter to the Corinthians that may have explained the circumstances of this other person's expulsion from the church. This "lost letter" may be contained in Chapters 10-13 which do present the tone of a "sorrowful letter" mentioned in verse 3, and may provide some justification to this theory.

3. An interesting verse used to substantiate the doctrine of Confession. This is not entirely without merit, although it does not outline the practice as it exists today. At minimum, however, it affirms the right of the apostles to decree that a sin repented of is covered by the blood of Christ. Beyond that, it may show the apostolic gift to remit at least the temporal consequences of some sins, for we note that in virtually every instance where *Jesus* remitted someone's sins, it was done in connection with physical healing.

4. More than one person has wondered about Paul's use of the word "**always**" here. On the face of it, it sounds as if he is suggesting that Christians only experience victory in all trials. That is obviously untrue, and most likely Paul is stating his confidence that God somehow works through all trials, and that even apparent failures and troubles can have some divine good brought out of them when the Christian maintains his faith through them.

5. "**And who is sufficient for these things?**" is better understood as: "*And who is up to take on these tasks?*" The answer: Paul, his associates, and those who have apprehended the true message of the Gospel.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?¹

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.²

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit³: for the

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

1 [Now that I have spoken about what we endure on behalf of the Gospel,] do we again make ourselves commendable in your eyes? Or do we--as some others--need letters of commendation either to you or from you [in order to be respected]?

2 You, yourselves, are our letter, one written in our hearts, which is known and read by all men.

3 For you are clearly a [living] letter from Christ, born from our ministry [in his name], written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God--and written not on stone tablets, but in the flesh tablets of the heart.

4-6 We are sure of this because of the trust we have to God through Christ, and not because we think *we're* anything. No, our ability is from God alone, who is the One who made us skilled ministers in presenting the new testament to humanity: Not that of the letter [of the Law], but that of the

letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.
 7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:⁴
 8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?
 9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.
 10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.
 11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.
 12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:
 13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:
 14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament⁵; which vail is done away in Christ.
 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.
 16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.
 17 Now the Lord is that Spirit⁶: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
 18 But we all, with open face⁷ beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Spirit, for the letter can only kill us, but the Spirit gives us life.
 7-8 But if the giving of a system that brought death [--the 10 Commandments--] written and engraved on stones was so glorious that the children of Israel could not look into the face of Moses because it shined so brightly, even though the glory was fading away, how much more glorious shall the [giving and] ministry of the *Holy Spirit* be?!
 9 For if the giving of [a system that could only bring] condemnation was glorious, much more glorious is [a ministry] that bestows righteousness!
 10 For even the original glory of the Torah was, and is, no glory at all in comparison to the glory [of the New covenant] that has exceeded and surpassed it.
 11 For if the covenant of the Torah--which has been done away with--was glorious, much more glory remains in the covenant that shall never be done away with.
 12-13 Therefore, since we have such hope, we speak openly [and hide nothing], unlike Moses, who had to put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon the [glory of the] very thing that was being abolished.
 14 Even so, Israel's mind was blinded, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant of the Torah is read--though this veil is removed through Christ.
 15 But even to this day, when the books of Moses are read, the veil is upon Israel's heart.
 16 Yet when the heart of a Jew turns to the Lord [Jesus], the veil is taken away [because he now understands the truth of what the Torah pointed to].
 17 Now the Lord [Jesus] *is* the [revelation that removes the veil], and where the [revelation] of the Lord is, there is liberty.
 17 [Alternate reading]: Now the Lord is the Spirit [--the revelation that removes the veil--] and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
 18 But we all, with our unveiled faces, mirror the glory of the Lord, and we are all being changed, in stages, into the same image of his glory by the Spirit of the Lord.

1. A reference to Paul's continuous frustration with the Judaisers who would follow in his footsteps, claiming authority from the apostles to direct the new converts away from Paul's teachings, and indoctrinate them into Mosaic Law.
 2. This is yet another criticism of returning to Mosaic Law. Here, Paul shows the distinction and dichotomy between the 10 Commandments written in stone--which ultimately bring condemnation because of man's unwillingness and inability to even keep them as God wants--and the Spirit, which breathes the life of Christ into the believer and manifests the heart of the Torah in his life.
 3. There is often a false conclusion made from this verse by those who use the term, "the letter versus the spirit of the Law." Now while that idea is not intrinsically bad, Paul is actually saying that the Torah, independent of the regeneration and anointing of the Holy Spirit, can only bring condemnation. It is through the New covenant of faith in Christ that the Mosaic covenant is fulfilled, superseded and replaced with a better covenant that brings eternal life.
 4. My 7th-Day Adventist friends, among others, unfortunately make a false dichotomy between the 10 Commandments and the remaining 603 commandments of the Torah. In their view, "the Law" is actually the 10 Commandments, because they were written by the hand of God on stone (the most permanent material available), whereas the remainder of the Torah was written on parchment, thus suggesting a lack of permanence. The problem is, Jesus' comments about even '**jots and tittles**' never passing away can only refer to the full Torah since there is nothing in the 10 Commandments that could be considered an insignificant jot or tittle! Additionally, Ex. 24:6-8 and Heb. 9:18-20 very clearly state that the covenant of God's Law was the "**scroll**" of the Law, not the stone of the 10 Commandments! There also was no blood sacrifice involved in the receipt of the 10 Commandments, again making them invalid as a *ratified* covenant apart from the *whole* of the Law (Heb. 9:16).
 Though called a "**covenant**" in Scripture, there are some factors to be considered: First, because of Israel's rebellion, Moses broke the first set. The author believes this was because the people had disqualified themselves from this simple covenant and Moses realized this. The 603 extra commandments that followed as punishment would be the basis of Paul's stating that the Law "**...was added because of transgressions**." Originally, the full scroll of the Torah was joined in some way to the ark (KJV says "**in the side**" of the ark, and some ancient rabbis --rabbi Meir, for instance--actually taught it was placed inside the Ark *alongside* the replacement stone tablets) and thus given *equal prominence* with the stone tablets as shown in Deut. 31:26. Other rabbis (Gaon, and also the Rebbe in modern times) viewed the Decalogue as category heads under which the remaining 603 were grouped, or as encapsulations of the 613, and thus the 10 represented the 613, with all 613 equally binding. The author's speculation is that since some items within the Ark had nothing to do with the covenant of Law, they all represented the rebellions and murmurings of Israel

in the Wilderness, with God's mercy seat above illustrating the 'triumph of mercy over judgment' (James 2:13), and thus the 10 Commandments were not there as a ratified covenant apart from the full Torah, but were there as an illustration of rebellion and mercy. Whatever the case, the people wound up with a covenant of 613 commandments, not 10 (Heb. 9:16)!

Certainly, the 10 Commandments are a wonderful basis for righteous living, and they harmonize with some of the minimum requirements to enter the Kingdom. (As noted in Acts 15, the Holy Spirit lists the minimum requirements that must be met to join the Christian community, some of which harmonize with parts of the 10 Commandments, but the Spirit *does not* repeat the Decalogue, which He could have, and should have done, if the Adventist view is correct.) But it is spiritual heresy to teach that we are "under" the 10 Commandments in the way that the Jews were "under" Mosaic Law, for the 10 Commandments have been "abolished" as binding law through which observance places a man in God's right standing. (See also Romans 4:15.)

A critical blow to extremist Messianic and Adventist theology is also found here through verse 13. As shown in these passages, the entire Mosaic covenant, from the 10 Commandments forward, was in the process of being abolished from its inception, as noted from the glory that was fading from Moses' face from the time he received it! This notion will always be an offense to the "Child of the Flesh" who cannot transition from Law to Grace, or Old to New covenant because he will see it as a choice between Law and lawlessness when it is actually a choice between Law, lawlessness or liberty! Thus, if "religious" people are not accusing a minister with this revelation of preaching lawlessness and antinomianism, that minister is not preaching the Gospel of Paul!

5. "Old Testament" here is a synonym for the covenant of the Law. This is also the first reference in the New Testament to the "Old Testament." It should be noted that referring to the books of the Bible before the Gospels as the "Old Testament" traces itself to Bishop Melito of Sardis in the 2nd century. (Tertullian, meanwhile, coined the phrase "New Testament" for the 27 books after Malachi around AD 200.) Scriptural use of the term refers to the distinction between the Mosaic covenant that was based upon obeying commandments and animal sacrifice, and the covenant of reconciliation to God through the atonement of Christ.

6. This verse has caused problems for many because of its strangely Modalistic language, which seems to say Jesus is Himself the Holy Spirit. I personally solve the problem by interpreting the passage to mean not that Jesus is the Holy Spirit—or any other sort of spirit—but that the word "spirit" here is being used as an Eastern idiom for a revelational teaching or doctrine, a notion I employ in the paraphrase. Paul would thus be using a word play. I can be wrong, of course—but if I am, we are left with the need to explain Paul's use of dangerously Modalistic language.

7. Paul is referring again to the superiority of the Christian covenant over the Mosaic, for the Israelites could not even look upon the glory of Moses unless he wore a veil. Now, under the covenant of adoption, we can behold God face-to-face as sons and daughters, and also reflect God's attributes through the indwelling power of the Spirit as the glory on Moses' face prefigured this.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;
 2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God¹ deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
 3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded² the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.
 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.
 8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;
 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.³
 11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.
 12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.
 13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Since by God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not grow weary [and take the easy way out by exploiting our rank as apostles of the Gospel].
 2 But we have renounced all dishonest and underhanded methods of preaching the Message of God—not handling it deceitfully, but displaying its truth clearly [by our words and actions,] which all men may see and judge in the sight of God.
 3-4 But if *our* Gospel is veiled to anyone, it is to those who are lost: Those unbelievers whose minds have been intellectually blinded by the god of this world to keep the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ—who is the image of God—from shining to them.
 5 For we don't preach ourselves; we preach *Christ Jesus* as Lord, and ourselves your slaves for Jesus' sake.
 6 For God, who commanded, "**Let there be light!**" out of the darkness, has shined in our own hearts to give the light of knowledge of His glory that was revealed in the face of *Jesus Christ* [rather than Moses].
 7 But we have this treasure in the [worthless clay bodies of ours] so that the glorious power can be seen to be of God, not us.
 8 For we are troubled wherever we turn, but we do not distress. We are perplexed, but we do not despair.
 9 We are persecuted, but God does not forsake us. We are thrown down, but not destroyed.
 10 We always bear in our bodies the death-torment of the Lord Jesus' passion the day he was crucified, that the [resurrection] life of Jesus might also be manifested in our bodies.
 11 For we who live are ever being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh.

is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;⁴
 14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.
 15 For all things are for your sakes⁵, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.
 16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.
 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;
 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

12 So then death is in and upon us so that *you* can be full of life.
 13-14 We, having the same spirit of faith as David, who wrote in the Psalms: **I believed, and therefore have I spoken**, also believe, and therefore *we* speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us up as well, and will bring us forth with you [on Judgment Day].
 15 For all things we do and go through are for your benefit, so that as His abundant grace spreads, more and more people will give thanks, and God will be glorified.
 16 This is *why* we shall not grow weary! So, though our physical body is perishing, our spirit is re-energized with new life daily.
 17 For the worst that can befall us is only a light affliction that lasts but a moment, and it develops in us a far more tremendous weight of eternal glory.
 18 So we fix our gaze and follow not what we see with the normal eye, but we focus on and follow the invisible--for what is visible is temporal, but what is invisible is eternal!

1. Another common mistake by Christians is to see the phrase "**the word of God**" as being a synonym for "the Scriptures." In fact, that phrase is almost never used in that manner within the New Testament; it is actually used in the sense of God's proclamation, message, or decree. Paul otherwise in this verse is bringing out the fact that he has done nothing disreputable in his ministry, adhering to a high Christian standard.
2. It is noteworthy to bear in mind that every non-believer, no matter how learned or moral, is under demonic deception and blinded to the truth of the Gospel until the Holy Spirit aids in lifting that deception.
3. This is a reference to Christian suffering, which is one means by which we are made into Christ's image.
4. This verse is used by some in the Faith movement to bolster faith and confession principles. It is better understood as making the point that Paul did not keep silent about the truth he had found for fear of his own life, but rather that he proclaimed the truth regardless of the consequences.
5. Better paraphrased as: "*All things we do and go through are for your benefit.*"

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.¹
 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:
 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.
 4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.²
 5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.³
 6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:
 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)
 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.⁴
 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.⁵
 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.⁶
 11 Knowing therefore the terror⁷ of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

1 For we know that if our earthly tabernacle--our bodies--crumble to dust, we have a new and everlasting tabernacle in heaven built not with human hands, but by God.
 2 For while we are in this body, we groan in our inward parts, greatly desiring to be clothed with the body from heaven that awaits us,
 3 So that once we don it, we will not be found naked.
 4 For we who are in this earthly tabernacle groan, being burdened by the overwhelming urge not to be naked, but to be clothed in the way that our mortality will be swallowed up in [eternal] life.
 5 Now [God], who created us for this, has given us the down payment of the Holy Spirit [to lead us toward that state of ultimate perfection and eternal life].
 6 Therefore, we are always confident in that knowledge while we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord.
 7 For we walk by what we believe, and not by what we see!
 8 We are confident, I say, and more willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.
 9 But we labor so that, whether we are present with, or absent from the Lord, we may be pleasing to him.
 10 For we must all stand before the judgment seat of [Christ], where everyone [--saved or unsaved--] will be handed out what is appropriate to what they have done in life, be it good or bad.
 11 Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we try to convert men to the faith. But God knows our motives are pure, and we trust you know that too, deep down.

consciences.

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.⁸

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.⁹

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation¹⁰;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.¹¹

12 For again, we do not boast about ourselves to you—but we give you the opportunity to boast about us so you can have an answer for those who glory in outward appearances and not from what is in the heart.

13 If we're "crazy," it is because we do what we do for God. If we're sane, it is because of you.

14 For the love of Christ constrains us to do this, because we have come to accept that if one died for all, then all were dead;

15 And that he died for all, so that all who are alive should no longer live for themselves, but instead live for him who died and rose from the dead [to give them true and eternal life].

16 So we no longer view people in the same way as we used to, just as we who once knew Christ as a mere human being now see *him* much differently too!

17 Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a totally new sort of creature, and the old things have passed away, making all things new.

18-19 All credit for what has been done goes to God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and given us the ministry of converting people from a state of unacceptability, to a state of purity and acceptance, proclaiming how God, through Christ, was converting the world to Himself, while graciously ignoring man's sins against Him; and He has imparted that message of reconciliation to us so that we can tell others.

20 Now we are Christ's ambassadors, and it is the same as if God Himself were begging you to accept what we say.

So we beg you, in the place of Christ, to be reconciled to God.

21 For God made Christ, who knew no sin, to become sin for us, so that we—in him—could be made the righteousness of God!

1. The 'earthly tabernacle' referred to by Paul is our mortal body. Paul's point here is that there is a glorified body awaiting us in the Resurrection.

2. Using poetic language in verses 2-4, Paul has basically made the point our inner man yearns for our entire being to be free from sin and clothed with the perfection of the Spirit, something that cannot occur before death and resurrection.

3. This verse could be paraphrased as: "Now God, who has ordained us to this, has given us the down payment of the Holy Spirit [to lead us toward that state of ultimate perfection and eternal life]."

4. One of a number of verses challenging the false doctrine of "Soul Sleep." When coupled with chapter 12, verse 2, no question is left regarding whether man has a spirit that has consciousness beyond the shell of the body.

5. This is a somewhat controversial verse. One could (like some cults) view it as suggesting that we must make sure we do enough good deeds to escape God's condemnation and be worthy of salvation even if we are believers. The problem is, this notion would contradict other teachings of Paul on the salvation issue. The word "accepted" can, and should be, understood as "pleasing." Thus, the verse is saying that we labor to do the things of God so that He will be pleased with us, rather than hope that He will "accept" us into the Kingdom by somehow judging whether we have lived righteously enough to pass muster.

6. This is another misunderstood verse. Some take the view that it means God (or Jesus) will stand the Christian up and review every sin he ever committed. After raking us over the coals for our sins, He will then briefly list the good things we did, and then give us a reward we don't deserve. But the judgment spoken of means two different things to two different groups: The saved have their sins washed away, and those sins will never again be brought to their remembrance. Thus, only the "good" things they have done will be reviewed and rewarded, based on the motivations of the person. The unsaved, who are bound for a Godless eternity, cannot receive a reward no matter how much "good" they have done, nor can any "good" in their earthly lives somehow offset the penalty for any of their sins. (If it could, there would be no need for Christ; all one would need do to achieve eternal life would be to do enough good deeds to offset his bad deeds.) Thus, the unsaved is judged according to the sins he committed, and no review of his "goodness" comes into play. It should also be noted that "Christ" does not appear in all texts; some have "God" instead.

7. "Terror" is too strong a word; "fear" is the correct word.

8. In verses 11 through 15, Paul is summing up the point that he does what he does to please Christ, and that one who has chosen to follow Him lives to serve others in His name.

9. This difficult verse can be paraphrased like this: "So at this point we no longer see people in the same way as we used to, in the same way we who once knew Christ as a mere human being now see Him much differently."

10. "Reconciliation" is a word referring to a money-changer exchanging non-kosher money for kosher coinage acceptable for use in the Temple.

11. This verse opens up a can of worms. Some teachers deny the clear statement of the verse here that Christ literally was "made to be sin" on the cross, and redefine the verse as "sin offering." However, the truth doesn't mean Jesus became a demonic being or the

personification of sin, but it does mean He took man's sin upon Himself and paid the penalty as if He *had* committed those sins.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.
 2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)
 3 Giving no offence¹ in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:
 4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,
 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;
 6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,
 7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,
 8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;
 9 As unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;
 10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.
 11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you,² our heart is enlarged.
 12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.³
 13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.
 14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:⁴ for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?
 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?
 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,
 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

1 We then, working together with Christ, beg you also not to receive God's grace in vain.
 2 For God says: **I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee.** And now is the *accepted time*; and now is the *day of salvation*!
 3 So we do nothing that could possibly cause anyone to stumble, so that our ministry is not brought into disrepute.
 4-5 But in everything we do, we patiently uphold a high standard as ministers of God despite afflictions, hardship, distress, whippings, jail, vigilante mobs, hard work, constantly having to watch out for danger, and starvation.
 6-7 We display purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, and sincere love through the Holy Spirit, the message of truth, and the power of God, with the weapons of righteousness as our sword and shield.
 8 We maintain a high standard in the face of honor or dishonor, whether we are spoken well of or denounced, and whether or not we are accused of being deceivers--despite our being sincere.
 9 Our standard is the same if we are unknown or well-known. We are always on the verge of dying, yet we continue to live. We are always being scourged by one authority or another, but yet we survive.
 10 We are ever facing sorrow, yet we always rejoice. We are always poor, yet make others rich. We never have anything, but we possess everything [through Christ].
 11 O you Corinthians, we have taught you all we know, and exposed our hearts to you.
 12 We never restrain our affection for you, but you restrain yours from us!
 13-14 If you would show the same affection for us as we do you, I beg you, as I would my own children, to open your hearts and receive what I have to tell you: Do not enter into marriage with an unbeliever! For what accord does righteousness have with unrighteousness? And what communion does light have with darkness?
 15 What agreement does Christ have with [Satan]? Or what does a believer have in common with a worshipper of false gods?
 16 What agreement does the Temple of God have with idols? For you are the Temple of the Living God. Remember God said: **I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people...**
 17 **Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,**
 18 **And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.**

1. This is the only place in the New Testament where this word, which means to cause a person to stumble, is found.

2. "**Our mouth is open to you**" is an idiom meaning: "We have taught you all we know."

3. This, and the following verse, are obviously very difficult to understand. The best paraphrase I can offer is:

"We never restrain our affection for you, but you restrain yours from us!

"If you would show the same affection for us as we do you, I beg you, as I would my own children, to open your hearts and receive what I have to tell you: Do not enter into marriage with an unbeliever! For what accord does righteousness have with unrighteousness? And what communion does light have with darkness?"

4. This is an absolute command that Christians are never to marry a non-Christian. However, the line is drawn at leaving an unsaved spouse to find someone else, unless that spouse abandons the marriage or is unfaithful.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,¹ perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
 2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.
 3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.
 4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.
 5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.
 6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;
 7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.
 8 For though I made you sorry with a letter², I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.
 9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.
 10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.³
 11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!⁴ In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.
 12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.
 13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.
 14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.
 15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.
 16 I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

1 Dearly beloved, since we have these promises from God, let us cleanse ourselves from any contamination of our flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in reverence toward God.
 2 Open your hearts to us. We have done wrong to no man, nor have we corrupted or defrauded anyone.
 3 I don't say this to condemn you--for as I have said before, you are in *our* hearts, and we are ready to live or die for or with you.
 4 I can speak boldly to you, for great is my pride in you. I am filled with comfort, and am exceedingly joyful through all our tribulation.
 5 For when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we had trouble on every side. We had faced every sort of fight on the outside, and we were greatly afraid on the inside.
 6 Nevertheless God, who comforts the downtrodden, comforted us by the arrival of Titus.
 7 And not only by his arrival, but also with the good report he told about you that brought comfort to both him and us. He told us of your longing, mourning, and passionate concern over me--which caused me to rejoice all the more when I heard that.
 8 For though I grieved you in an earlier letter, I am not sorry, though for a while I *was* sorry because I knew that letter grieved you--but that was only temporary.
 9 So now I am rejoicing--not that you were just grieved, but that you were grieved in a way that moved you to repentance. You had a godly sorrow, and thus were not really harmed by us in any way.
 10 You see, godly sorrow brings forth repentance to salvation with no regrets, while worldly sorrow [is only a feeling with no change in behavior that] brings forth death in the end.
 11 You are living proof of that. You had a godly sorrow, and look what it produced: Such a quick response it wrought in you, such a desire to wipe the slate clean, such remorse [toward sin], such fear, such strong desire, such zeal, and such vindication! In all the things you've done, you have shown yourselves innocent in this matter.
 12 That's why, when I wrote to you, I did it not for the good of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but I wrote it so we could all apprehend how concerned [each of us is for the other] in the sight of God.
 13 Therefore we were comforted by all this, and rejoiced even more when we saw Titus and the way his own spirit was refreshed by you all.
 14 For if I have boasted to him about anything regarding you, I have not been made ashamed. But just as we spoke everything to you in truth, likewise the boasting of you I made to Titus was found to be equally truthful.
 15 And his inward love and passion for you is all the stronger when he remembers how obedient you were, receiving him with fear and trembling into your midst.
 16 I therefore rejoice that I can be confident in you in every way!

1. This is a critically important verse against the doctrine of "Once saved, always saved," which shows that sin contaminates the soul by attacking saving faith, with the potential for causing one to lose saving faith and be lost.

2. Not necessarily a reference to 1st Corinthians, but possibly a reference to the famous "lost letter."

3. This verse illustrates what true repentance is: A genuine sorrow that results in a change of attitude and behavior. This is distinctly different from the false repentance that comes from regret over the circumstances one now finds himself in as a result of his deeds.

4. "Revenge" is better understood as a word meaning "vindication."

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 8

1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;
 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.¹
 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;
 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
 5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.
 6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.
 7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.
 8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.
 9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.
 10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.
 11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.
 12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.
 13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:
 14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:
 15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.
 16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.
 17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.
 18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;
 19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:
 20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:
 21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.
 22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 8

1 Now, brethren, we want to tell you about the grace of God bestowed upon the *Macedonian* churches [and especially the church at Philippi].
 2 Though facing many trials and afflictions, their abundance of joy, despite their deep poverty, caused their generosity to overflow.
 3 For I can attest to the fact that, of their own free will and ability, they not only gave what they could, but went even beyond that and were willing to give until it hurt.
 4 Eager to share in the task, they begged us to accept the gift [we knew they could not afford to give], and pass it on to the righteous in Jerusalem.
 5 And they went beyond our expectations, first seeking God's will over what they should give before they even placed themselves at both the Lord and our disposal with their gift.
 6 So we asked Titus, since he had approached you about this earlier, to return and finish this task, and receive what comes out of the grace you have for the relief fund.
 7 Therefore, since you are abounding in all things like faith, speaking, knowledge, enthusiasm, and in your love for us--let us see that you abound in this grace [of giving] as well.
 8-9 I don't say this as a commandment, but only to point out how the other churches have treated this task; and so I hope to see proof of your own sincere love--for you know how our Lord *Jesus Christ* displayed his own grace: Though he was rich, for *your* sake he became poor, that you, through *his* poverty, could become rich!
 10 So this is my advice: Since you were the first people last year to offer to give, and the first to start a collection, it would be good for you to finish what you started.
 11 So fulfill the collection from the resources you have with the same zeal you had when you decided to do it.
 12 For if a man there has a heart for this, then we're ready to accept what he *can* give, not what he *can't* give.
 13 For I don't mean for other men to have their bills paid while you go into debt for them.
 14 But my view is one of balance: That your current prosperity can come to the aid of the Jerusalem church, which is in need; and someday their prosperity may be the source to help *you* when times get tough *there*. Thus, everything will even out in the end.
 15 As the Scripture says: **He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.**
 16 But thanks be to God for His putting the same love for you in the heart of Titus that I have for you.
 17 For he certainly accepted our commission to return to you; but more than that, he was eager to return.
 18 And we have sent with him our brother who has been widely praised in all the churches for his work in the Gospel.
 19 Not only that, but he was chosen by the churches to accompany us with the Jerusalem relief fund, which is being collected by us for the glory of the same Lord, and is evidence of your eager sincerity.
 20 His presence will help us avoid any false suggestion of impropriety on our part regarding all the money we're collecting.
 21 So we are *being honorable*, not only *in the sight of the Lord*, but also *in the sight of men*.

confidence which I have in you.

23 Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

22 We've also sent with them another brother whom we have often proven faithful in many tasks, and who has been eager to go since he learned of the great confidence I have in you.

23 Now if anyone asks about this other brother Titus, he is my partner and associate in my work among you. If anyone asks about the brethren with him, they are apostles from the churches, and a glory to Christ.

24 So show love to them, and let the other churches see the proof of your own love and of our boasts about you.

1. Paul is making reference to the fact that the Macedonians materially contributed to help their fellow Christians elsewhere, despite their own hardships. Through the remainder of this and the next chapter, he goes to great lengths to encourage the believers to be ready to imitate the example of himself and his companions; and he goes so far as to send on some of his assistants beforehand to make sure he won't be disappointed.

What prompted this unusual concern on Paul's part we cannot know. Apparently, he was concerned that the Corinthians would not follow through on their earlier promise to have a bountiful donation ready for him to take to the church in Jerusalem, which was undergoing great hardship and persecution.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 9

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.¹

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness²;))

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;³

13 Whiles by the experiment⁴ of this

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 9

1 For as regards [the great need the righteous in Jerusalem have at this time for assistance], there is no need for me to write in detail.

2 I am aware of your eagerness to come to their aid, and have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that southern Greece was ready to get things going a year ago. Your zeal has provoked very many of them into action as well.

3 Even so, I have sent the brethren [bringing this letter] to you, to make certain you have carried through on this, lest my boasting of you be found to be premature,

4 And those from Macedonia who accompany me arrive to find you unprepared, which would bring shame for this confident boasting upon *us*, let alone you.

5 Therefore, I thought it best to encourage the brethren to go on before us to make certain that everything talked about before, regarding your blessing, was in place and ready for our arrival. I did this with the motive of seeing this be something given *as* a blessing, rather than something given out of intimidation.

5 [*Alternate reading*]: Therefore, I thought it best to send the brethren ahead of us to make certain that everything talked about before, regarding your blessing, was in place and ready for our arrival. I did this with the motive of seeing you place *yourselves* in a position to receive blessing, and not out of a desire to profit off you.

6 But I tell you this: He who sows sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully, shall reap a bountiful harvest.

7 So let every man give out of what he has decided in his heart to share. Never give grudgingly or out of obligation, *for God loves a cheerful giver*.

8 And remember that God is able to meet every need *you* have out of His abundant grace so every need can be met, and so you can be in a position to abound in every good work.

9 As it is written: **[A righteous man] hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.**

10 Now may God, who gives seed to the sower, both give you food for your tables, and multiply the harvest of the seed you have sown, increasing the fruits of your charity,

11 And enriching you to the point you can give even more, which through us will cause those to whom we deliver the gift to give thanksgiving to God.

12 For the disbursement of your charity does more than merely supply the needs of the righteous--it also results in God's being

ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;
 14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.
 15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

thanked by many.

13-14 This radical gift will be proof of your following the Gospel of Christ, and will show your commitment to them and all men, causing them to glorify God for you, and offer up prayers for you as a result of your generosity born from the exceeding amount of God's grace in you.

15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift of grace!

1. It is interesting that while some ministers condemn and ridicule so-called "Give to get" preaching, Paul seems to use a less-extreme version of the same theology here in his plea to Corinth, advising them that those who give generously to help others can count on God's generosity being poured back upon them in like measure.
2. "Righteousness" is better understood as: "Charity." It is not referring to righteousness in the sense of godliness.
3. This difficult verse could be paraphrased like this: "For the disbursement of your charity does more than merely supply the needs the righteous--it also results in God's being thanked by many."
4. "Experiment" should be translated: "Proof."

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you¹
 2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.
 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:
 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)
 5 Casting down imaginations², and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;
 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.³
 7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.
 8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:
 9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.
 10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.
 11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.
 12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.⁴
 13 But we will not boast of things without our measure⁵, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.
 14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

1-2 Now I Paul, "the one who is bold from a distance when he writes, but a wimp in person," beseech you personally, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, not to force me to show how bold I can actually be when I come face to face with those who have accused us of operating out of purely human motives!
 3 For though we may be men, living and walking in bodies of flesh, we don't fight by using mortal man's weapons or mortal man's tactics.
 4-5 For the weapons we use in warfare are not natural ones, but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down human logic and every lofty mindset that seeks to hinder and exalt itself over the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity and making it obedient to Christ.
 6 And we are ready to take action against every person in the church who refuses to obey God's truth after those of you who *will* obey it put it into practice.
 7 Are you still making the mistake of making judgments based on outward appearances? If anyone there thinks he is one of Christ's, then he should also bear in mind that we are Christ's as well!
 8 For even if I am being rather heavy-handed in speaking of the authority the Lord has given us as apostles for your building up--not your tearing down--I will not be ashamed.
 9 I am not trying to arouse fear in you *only* by writing letters!
 10 For "his letters," they say, "are strong and powerful, but he's wimpy in person, and can hardly string two words together."
 11 Let whoever thinks that know that we will be just as bold in deeds when there as we are in letters when we are absent!
 12 Now we are not daring to number ourselves with, nor compare ourselves to, some who blow their own horn and pat themselves on the back. These people who measure their lives against each other's, and compare themselves with each other, are anything but wise.
 13 So we will not boast of things outside the scope our authority; we will boast according to what we did *within* the scope of authority God gave to us, including reaching you [with the Gospel].
 14 For we are not overstretching in these comments as if we had not been with you from the beginning. But we were the ones who first came all the way there and preached the Gospel of Christ to you.

we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

15 Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith⁶ is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth

15-16 So we don't boast beyond what is proper--meaning, we won't take credit for other men's work [as some seem to be doing in our case]. But we have confidence that, when your [understanding] is increased, we will be more respected and heeded in your eyes, and will then have proper respect in your area of the world. Then we can go on to preach the Gospel in regions beyond you where it is unknown, rather than following in the footsteps of other men and milking their work.

17 But *he who boasts about anything should boast in the Lord.*

18 For the one who will be approved of is not the one who commends himself, but the one approved of will be the one whom the *Lord* commends.

1. A reference by Paul to the fact that he was a powerful letter-writer, but in person was a less-than-imposing speaker.

2. "Imaginations" could be understood as the worldviews that arise through human reasoning and logic outside of the Scriptures.

3. Meaning that once those able to receive Paul's message have done so, the others who reject it will be dealt with in person by the apostle on his return.

4. The past several verses, continuing on to the end of the chapter, have been a criticism of the Judaizers, who have arrogantly been seeking to overturn Paul's work among the Gentiles by drawing the believers into following them.

5. "Measure," throughout this chapter, should probably be viewed as the authority given Paul by God over the churches.

6. "Faith" here appears to be used as a synonym for *understanding* (Matt. 16: 8, 11). This may be because the Jews viewed faith not only as belief or trusting, but as something practically made up of love of God, *knowledge of His ways*, and obedience to Him.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.¹

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefeest apostles.

6 But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?²

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

1 Would to God you would bear with some more of my foolish talking--but I know you are bearing with me.

2 You see, I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. For I acted as the Matchmaker between you and the one husband whose marriage I arranged with you; and I want to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I worry, lest somehow--as the serpent tricked Eve through his cunning--your minds will likewise be deceived into abandoning your sincere dedication to Christ [and that you'll wind up with a different husband than the one you were espoused to].

4 For if some so-called ["Super apostle"] comes and preaches a different sort of Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive another Spirit than the one you first received, or another sort of Gospel than ours that you have not accepted--you seem open to listening and heeding the person deceiving you with these false ideas and false Christ!

5 I don't think I have shown myself inferior to these "Super apostles" in any way.

6 But though my speech may be less than brilliant, my knowledge speaks for itself as we have proven by all the things we have done among you.

7 Did I do something wrong when I humbled myself in order to exalt *you*, by preaching the Gospel of God without any notion of charging you for it?!

8 I robbed from the resources of other churches, taking donations from them to see my needs met, during my ministry there with you.

9 And when I was with you and in need, I asked nothing from any one of you. Instead, all the funds I lived off came from the brethren arriving from [northern Greece]. I have deliberately kept myself from being a burden to any of you, and I will continue that policy.

10 I swear by the truth of Christ that is within me, that no man shall stop my boasting of not taking a cent off any of you in [southern Greece]!

11 Why? Because I don't love you? Well, God knows I do!

12 But I will go on in the same manner as I have been doing to

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness³; whose end shall be according to their works.

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

17 That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.

20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit wheresoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

33 And through a window in a basket⁴ was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

show up these self-absorbed men for what they are, since they claim to be like us, but would never follow our actual example [--which is proof of their hypocrisy]!

13 For these are false apostles, deceitful laborers, transforming themselves into the outward appearance of apostles of Christ.

14 And no wonder, for even Satan himself can masquerade as an angel of light.

15 Therefore, it is no great shock if Satan's servants can also transform themselves outwardly as servants of righteousness. Their fate will be according to the deeds they have actually done [from their black hearts]!

16 I repeat--let no one make the mistake of thinking I am a fool. But if indeed I am a fool, here is the sort of fool I am, and here is the foolishness I could boast of:

17 Keep in mind this is not the Lord's way of speech, but I'm talking like the foolish braggarts we're speaking of--so bear with me.

18 Seeing that men are boasting over mere human achievements, I will do some boasting as well [since that seems to impress you].

19-20 Because apparently you're so "smart," that you eagerly put up with these fools who boast for their own glory, and by this let them put you into bondage, and devour you, and rob you, and glorify themselves while they insult you the whole time!

21 To my shame, I admit we've been "stupid," [compared to these people,] so let me now brag like them. Keep in mind I am only talking foolishly like them--this is not what I actually believe!

22 Are *they* Hebrews? Well--so am I! Are *they* Israelites? Well--so am I! Are *they* descended from Abraham? Well--so am I!

23 Are *they* ministers of Christ? Keep in mind I am only talking like a fool. I am far more so! I've worked harder. I've been beaten more times than I can count. I've spent time in prison. I've faced death uncounted times!

24 The unbelieving Jews gave me the thirty-nine stripes five times [because I wouldn't cease to preach]!

25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked--and one of those times I spent a full day and night in the water until someone rescued me.

26 On my many travels, I've often had to cross swollen rivers, faced bandits, and faced peril at the hands of my own countrymen. I've faced danger at the hands of the heathen. I've been in danger in cities, in the wilderness, and at sea. I've been in peril by false brethren.

27 I've spent many sleepless nights in pain and at the end of my strength hungry, on watch against danger, cold and without proper clothing.

28 Besides all the pressure from the outside, there is my inner passion and concern over all the churches I deal with daily.

29 Who there is weak without my being weak with him? Who there stumbles, that I am not indignant over it?

30 But if I really must boast, let me boast of my true weaknesses.

31 Our eternally Blessed God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, knows I do not lie:

32 In Damascus, the governor under Antipas' father-in-law, King Aretas, had a garrison of troops on the lookout for me, hoping to apprehend me.

33 But through a window, hanging on a braided rope, I was lowered down the city walls and escaped his clutches.

1. This was one of Paul's points that Christianity throughout the ages has missed as it repeated the mistake of Judaism, constantly trying to regulate behavior and godliness by hosts of man-made traditions and commandments. Paul rarely articulated holiness in the way the church itself has over the centuries. He understood true holiness came as a fruit of salvation, and thus was given birth his constant fight to break the church free from the mindset that conformity through mandated behavior equaled godliness.
2. In verses 7-10 Paul reminds them of the fact that he never took a cent from the people of Corinth, receiving his stipends from other churches. This apparently was in contrast to his opponents, who fleeced the sheep for their own benefit.
3. **"Righteousness"** here means acting godly, displaying an outward form of holy living while inwardly having failed to comprehend the true basis of salvation. Examples in our own culture would be religions or movements that equate lifestyle with acceptance by God. In the case of the LDS Church, this problem was perfectly articulated by the opening prayer of the Mormon prophet at a conference I once observed, who prayed: "Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that because we are walking steadfastly in the Ordinances of Thy Church, we are able to appropriate the faith unto salvation."
- Well, one does not appropriate faith because he walks in obedience to the commandments. One walks in obedience because he has *already* been saved. So while we may often criticize groups like the Mormons, many Christian brethren believe precisely the same thing! They may say it differently, but at the core of some so-called holiness movements is a presumption that because one lives in an austere manner, God accepts him as His child and considers him to be in a place of right standing.
4. Probably not in a **"basket"** as is translated in the KJV, but by a braided rope.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.
 2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven²
 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
 5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.
 6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.
 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh³, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.
 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.
 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.
 11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me:⁴ for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.
 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.
 13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.
 14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

1 It is stupid to boast like this, but let me now tell you of some visions and revelations from the Lord.
 2-4 I knew a man in Christ some fourteen years ago, who was caught up to the third [level of] heaven. Now whether he was there bodily or in the spirit alone, I can't say--God knows. And I knew this man, who--again whether there bodily or in the spirit alone, I don't know, but God knows--was caught up to the Garden of Eden which is there, and heard things so utterly incredible that he was forbidden to share them with even one soul!
 5 I could glory and boast of a man like that. But even so, I refuse to glory [about what I have done or seen]. Instead, I will glory in my *weakness*.
 6 Even if I wanted to glory--and, in truth, glory I could without being a fool--I won't, lest any man think more of me than he should, based on what he has seen or heard from me.
 7 [God also didn't want me to get proud and boast,] and so, to keep me from getting overly proud of all the revelations I was given, I received a thorn in my flesh: one of Satan's [most powerful] fallen angels, who has plagued me with turmoil [every single place I go].
 8 Three times, I cried out to the Lord to deliver me from this being.
 9 But his answer was: "The grace I give you [to endure] is enough, for my strength is greatest when you are weak [and unable to solve your problems through *your own* strength and wisdom, for it's only then that I can fully work through you]." Knowing that, I thus prefer to glory in all my infirmities [and not grieve over them], so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
 10 Thus, I will delight in weakness, insults, and in my having to do what I must without regard for my personal safety! I will exult in distress and in persecution for Christ's sake. Yes, I will rejoice over every one of these problems--for when I am weak in these situations, I am strong [through Christ--and with *Christ* empowering me, Satan cannot possibly stop me]!
 11 Yes, I have become a total fool for boasting like this, but you have forced me to. You should have had respect for me otherwise, for I am no less important or used than the highest-ranking apostles.
 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were displayed among you: Signs, wonders, and mighty deeds done while I patiently endured among you.
 13 For what did I do among you there that was in any way inferior to what I do in any of other the churches but for the fact I did not burden you [with my own needs]? Forgive me for

you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?⁵

18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

21 And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

this [apparent] wrong!

14 Look--this is the third time I will be coming there, and I will not take any money from you even now! I seek nothing from you but your hearts, for parents should not take from their children, but they should store up an inheritance for them.

15 I will very gladly spend my money--and even myself--for you, though apparently the more I love you, the less I am loved by you in return!

16 But that is how it was--I took nothing from you, but because I am apparently a fraud, I was merely lulling you into a false sense of security before sweeping in for the kill, right?

17 Did I make so little as one copper piece off any of the people I sent to you?!

18 I asked Titus and another brother to go to you. Did Titus ask you for any money, or did we both instead have the same attitude of refusing to take anything from you? Didn't we both behave exactly the same?

19 Again, do you think we've just been making excuses for ourselves? We speak in plain sight of God as men of Christ--but everything we do, dearly beloved, we do for your building up.

20 [I write as I do because] I truly fear that neither of us will find the other in the state we'd hope. I worry I'll find things like: Arguing, jealousy, bad feelings, disputes, gossip, rumor mongering, arrogance, and disharmony.

21 I also fear that when I return, my God will shame me among you [for the obvious failure of what I thought I had accomplished], and thus I will be broken in grief over many who have already sinned and have not repented of the uncleanness, sexual sin, and lasciviousness they have committed.

1. If the plethora of Scripture elsewhere isn't enough, this verse here totally refutes the false doctrine of "Soul sleep," for Paul says he is unsure whether he was physically present in heaven, or whether his spirit had left his body. Had Paul believed that people don't really have a spirit body, he would never have said he was unsure whether or not he was physically or spiritually in heaven.

2. In Jewish belief, there were a total of seven levels of heaven: *Vilon, Rakia, Shechakim, Zebul, Maon, Machon* and *Araboth*. The third level, *Shechakim*, was where manna was made and the Torah created. It was from here that God also revealed Himself to the Patriarchs. There were also some beliefs that the Garden of Eden was taken up to heaven before the flood, and so Paul may have believed he was literally within the Garden of Eden on the third plane of heaven, thus accounting for his reference to "Paradise."

3. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" has always been a matter of speculation. First, it might be better understood as a "Splinter" or "sticker" under the skin that festers and causes irritation. Whether this "thorn" was bad eyesight, his opponents, the constant irritation of the Judaizers overturning his work, or some demonic spirit behind these problems cannot be known for certain.

4. Paul is basically being sarcastic here, saying, "I've been boasting because you people have been forcing me to do it!"

5. Returning to justifying himself, Paul rhetorically asks if he has done anything to exploit the Corinthians as his opponents have been claiming.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

1 This will be the third time I have come to you. As Scripture says: **In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word** [accusation of a crime] **be established.**

2-3 I warned you before, and give fair warning again, as if I were there rather than absent, what I said on my second visit: I am writing to tell those who have remained in sin--and to everyone else there--that when I arrive, I will not show any mercy [but will deliver the full pronouncement of God against the impurity in the church there], since you seek proof that Christ is speaking through me. And trust me--he is anything but weak among you; in fact, he is mighty among you [which some of you will be finding out the hard way].

4 For though Christ was crucified in his human weakness, yet he is now alive by the power of God. We also, humanly speaking, are weak in him; but we will live with him by the power of God--a power that we will be also using in our dealings with you!

5 [And so I suggest you] regularly do an honest self-

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.
7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.
8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.
9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection.
10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.
11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.
12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.
13 All the saints salute you.
14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

assessment of your thoughts, words and deeds to see if you are really in the faith. Test your own hearts and motivations. Do you recognize the presence of Jesus Christ within you--unless, of course, you are reprobates [without a true faith]?
6 I trust that you will come to see that *we* are not reprobates!
7 Now I pray to God that you do nothing that is evil--not so that we should look good in the eyes of others, but so that you should walk in integrity, even if *we* are viewed as reprobates.
8 Our job is to stand *for* the truth, and never to stand *against* the truth!
9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong; and we also wish for your perfection [in Christ].
10 Therefore, I write as I do while I am absent, lest when I come I must use sharp words and waste the power of the Lord given me for your building up on having to tear you down [in judgment].
11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be mature. Be comforted. Be united, and the God of love and peace shall be united with you.
12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
13 All the righteous salute you.
14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

ROMANS

Unfortunately, Romans is placed in Bibles as the first of Paul's epistles primarily for its length, although it was his 5th or 6th epistle, written between 55-57 AD. Considered by many to be the crown jewel of the New Testament, it shows how quickly Paul's revelation of justification had coalesced into its final written form, and the epistle became the cornerstone of Christian thought as the faith made its final divorce from the Jewish understanding of the Scriptures, righteousness, and justification.

Just how the Roman church came into existence is a complete mystery. The best guess made by scholars is that some Roman Jews who were in Jerusalem during the events of Acts 2 converted and returned home--probably with one or two unknown elders--to spread word that the Messiah had come. The church quickly flourished, incorporating both Jews and Gentiles into it until violence flared up between Christian and Orthodox Jews in the time of Claudius, resulting in the Jews being expelled from Rome for a time (49 AD). By the time of this epistle some Jews had apparently returned to Rome, for the letter clearly is written to both Jew and Gentile.

Many miss the fact that this epistle was brought to Rome by Phoebe (16:1-2). In doing so, she would have read the document to the church there, speaking in a tone that conveyed Paul's overall emotions as he wrote the letter. (This was a custom of the time.) She would also have explained--i.e., taught--any passages that needed further clarification.

This would certainly call into question the claim of some that Paul forbade women to teach men under any circumstances. (He was actually referring to wives and husbands, as we'll see in our study.)

Finally, I recommend reading Galatians and Romans together since parts are closely related.

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle¹, separated unto the gospel of God,
2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
4 And declared to be the Son of God² with power, according to the spirit of holiness³, by the resurrection from the dead:⁴
5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:
6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.
9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit⁵ in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;
10 Making request, if by any means now at length

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

1-4  Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, who has been called to be an apostle, and separated to proclaim the "Good News" of God, which He had promised in earlier times by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning His son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was incarnated and descended, humanly speaking, from King David, and also declared to be Son of God with power through the Holy Spirit in being resurrected from the dead!
5-6 Through Christ, we have been given the grace to carry out our apostolic commission: To reach out to all nations in Christ's name with the goal of bringing them to the obedience both to and from faith--including you, who are among those called to belong to Jesus Christ.
7 To all in Rome, beloved of God, and called to be righteous: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
8 First, I would like to say that I thank my God through Jesus Christ because of your faith, which is spoken of throughout the whole world.
9-10 For God, whom I minister before with all the zeal in my innermost being in proclaiming the Gospel of His son, is my witness that I never cease to make mention of you in my prayers, requesting that it be in His will for circumstances to work out just right so that I might have the opportunity to travel there.

I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift⁶, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles⁷.

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians⁸; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.⁹

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith¹⁰: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;¹¹

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.¹²

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;¹³

29 Being filled with all unrighteousness,

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart some gift from the Holy Spirit to help more fully establish you [in Christ],

12 So that ultimately we may be comforted together by our mutual faith.

13 However, brethren, I would not have you unaware that while I had often planned to come visit you so that I could have some fruit among you in Rome as I have in other nations, I found it necessary to delay.

14 For I am indebted to reach both the civilized *and* uncivilized worlds, the educated *and* uneducated.

15 So, with all the passion I have in me, I can't wait to come preach the Gospel to you in Rome also [as soon as time permits]!

16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is the very power of God that grants salvation for everyone who believes it--to the Jew first, but also the Gentile.

17 For within the Gospel of Christ, the righteousness of God is manifested, start to finish, by faith for it is written: *The just man shall [escape judgment, and] live by faith.*

18-19 For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness on the part of men who actually know, yet suppress the truth of God by supplanting it with unrighteousness--for the truth of God is actually manifested deep down inside of them by what He has shown them [on the outside].

20 For the fact that there is an invisible realm with a God behind it has been made plain from the beginning of time by virtue of the visible universe we can see with our own eyes. The things in the visible universe display His eternal power and godhood over all things, so unbelievers are considered by Him to be without any excuse whatever!

21 You see, there was a time when all men knew God, but they refused to glorify Him as the true God, and also were unthankful. Then they became caught up in their own philosophies and ideas, causing their foolish hearts to descend into the darkness of spiritual deception.

22-23 Thinking themselves to be intelligent, they actually became fools, transforming the glory of a perfect, unchanging God into a carved statue made in their own corrupt image [reflecting their own human philosophies and ideas]. Others changed God's true form and nature into that of some sort of bird, four-footed beast, or creeping reptile.

24 For this reason, God [withdrew the convicting power of His Spirit in the human conscience, and] let them go all the way in the growing, unclean urges of their deceived hearts that were turning from Him, even allowing them to yearn for, and yield themselves up to, [homosexual] defilement with their bodies between each other.

25 Such was the fate of those who turned the truth of God into their own lies, thus worshipping and serving the creation more than the Creator who is blessed forever more. Amen.

26 This is why God allowed them to eat the full fruit of what is in man's unregenerate heart by permitting them [without the hindrance of conscience] to give in to perverted sexual desires--for even their women burned with sexual lust for one another, twisting one hundred and eighty degrees what God had established as the natural expression of human sexuality.

27-29 In the same way, the men--leaving the natural use of the woman--burned with lust for one another, so they did that which is improper, receiving in return the full recompense for their error, which was unavoidable. For even as they did not like to retain God [and His truth] in their knowledge, God gave them over to a polluted mind to justify and even take

fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,
 30 Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection,¹⁴ implacable, unmerciful:
 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

pride in things like: Unrighteousness, sexual sin, wickedness, greed, envy, murder, arguing, deceit, malice, and gossip.
 30-31 They became backbiters, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boasters, inventors of new ways to commit evil, disobedient to their parents, unteachable, oath-breakers, lacking love for even their own families, stubborn, and unmerciful.
 32 Even though they knew [deep down] that in God's view those who do such things are deserving of death, they not only went ahead and did them, but they even approved of others doing likewise.

1. The word "**apostle**" in Greek originally referred to someone who undertook a military or commercial expedition on behalf of someone else. In Hebrew, the word was used to refer to someone who was sent out with a message either from God or the religious authorities.
2. "**Son of God**," as stated elsewhere, is a synonym for "the Messiah," or "King of Israel," and not always a reference to the virgin birth or Trinity.
3. There has long been a debate as to whether the term "**Spirit of holiness**" refers to the Holy Spirit or Jesus' own spirit. It may be a reference to Jesus, and Paul was making a statement about Christ's righteousness, pointing out that even His own spirit, unlike ours, was the essence of purity and Deity. In the paraphrase, however, I take the view it refers to the Holy Spirit because the text flows more naturally with that understanding.
4. The fact God resurrected Jesus from the dead was, in and of itself, a sign that He had God's approval.
5. Paul's reference to his "**spirit**" comes from the fact that, in Hellenic thought, man's spirit was believed to be the highest and deepest part of himself.
6. Not referring to so-called "Spiritual Gifts" mentioned in 1 Cor. 12, but more of an impartation of encouragement and spiritual blessing of fellowship, testimony, and instruction.
7. Absolutely should be translated as: "**Nations**," as it is in verse 5, not "**Gentiles**!"
8. "**Greeks**" and "**Barbarians**" refers to the civilized and uncivilized world.
9. Should be understood as: "*To the Jew first, but also the Gentile.*"
10. The term "**faith to faith**" has always been a bit confusing. Paul may be using an idiom to refer to the oracles of God being revealed to men of faith from Abraham onward. That, or he means something like: "From start to finish, by faith."
11. To "**hold the truth in unrighteousness**" means to ultimately know the truth, but pervert it. An example, appropriate to the topic discussed in this section, would be theologians who attempt to "prove" Paul's denunciation of homosexuality actually referred only to male temple prostitution.
12. This reference to animals will be shown in the next few verses to be speaking of making idolatrous images.
13. The whole section here has been talking about the departure from God by humanity over the ages, culminated by idolatrous worship of imaginary gods as a means of justifying debased human passions. In Judaism, there is a notion that one of the natural penalties for sin is to commit yet another sin. The text here is thus saying that God permitted the unrighteous to continue on in their sinful practices by withdrawing His presence and conviction, allowing the sins they pursued to turn them into their own image.
14. "**Without natural affection**" is not a reference to homosexuality, but is a translation of a word indicating lack of the sort of love one should have for his own family.

ROMANS CHAPTER 2

1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.¹
 2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.
 3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?
 4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?
 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;
 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:
 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

ROMANS CHAPTER 2

1 Therefore, O man, you who do the same things, yet judge yourself better than the next man, are without excuse, and only condemning yourself [out of your own mouth].
 2 We are sure that the God will justly punish *everyone* who does those sorts of things [whether in or out of the church].
 3 Do you really think that you, O man, who condemns others for the same things you do [in secret], will escape the judgment of God?
 4 Or do you scorn the riches of His goodness and long-suffering patience toward you, not realizing that the goodness of God [in withholding judgment against you] is actually beckoning you to repentance?
 5-6 Your hard and unrepentant heart is ultimately storing up for you a measure of God's wrath that will be revealed on the Day of Wrath, when the righteous judgment of God will be let loose, and every man will experience judgment based on what he has done.
 7 Those who have patiently pursued doing good will find glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.
 8-9 But those who have been contentious and did not obey the truth, but instead chose to follow the path of unrighteousness, will find indignation and wrath, and

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
 9 tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:
 11 For there is no respect of persons with God.
 12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;
 13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.)²
 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:
 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;³
 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.
 17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,
 18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;
 19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,
 20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.
 21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?⁴
 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?⁵
 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?
 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.
 25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.
 26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?
 27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?⁶
 28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.⁷

tribulation and anguish. This will fall upon all who do evil--the Jew first, but also the Gentile.

10 But every man who does good shall receive glory, honor, and peace--the Jew first, but also the Gentile.

11-13 For God shows no partiality, and as many who have committed sin outside of the Torah will also perish outside of the Torah; while as many who have known the Torah and yet sinned will be judged *by* the Torah--for it is not the hearers of the Torah who will be in right standing with God, but those who '**hear therefore, and do**' what the Torah said to do.

14 So when the Gentiles, who do not know the Torah, do by nature what the Torah teaches, these Gentiles--though they don't have or know the written Torah--show by their conscience that they understand the heart of what the Torah teaches.

15-16 You see, they show the presence of the universal precepts of the Torah in their hearts, and their consciences will either condemn or console them on Judgment Day, when God shall judge the secret parts of men's lives through Jesus Christ, as the Gospel I teach illustrates.

17-18 Look--you might be called a Jew, and boast of your security in God from the fact you have been taught the Torah, know His will, and can discern the essential points of right and wrong the Torah teaches.

19 You may be confident that your knowledge makes you a guide to the blind, and permits you to shine as a light to those who walk in darkness.

20 You may believe, because you have the knowledge and truth in the Torah, that you are qualified to teach the foolish, and the new converts.

21 But do you, who teach others, learn from your own teachings? If you preach that a man should not steal, do you steal [and somehow justify it]?

22 You, who say that a man should not commit adultery--do you commit adultery [and somehow justify it]? Do you, who abhor idols of false gods, rob sanctuaries?

23 Do you, who boast of your knowledge of the Torah, dishonor God by your *breaking* of that Torah?

24 For you [who behave like this] are an example of what the Scriptures say: **The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.**

25 You see, circumcision is profitable if you actually keep the Torah. But if you are a transgressor of the Torah, your circumcision is the same as uncircumcision. [In other words, your circumcision will not keep you in covenant with God if you walk in sin.]

26 Therefore, if a physically uncircumcised Gentile upholds the righteousness that the Torah teaches, won't that be counted as if he were physically circumcised?

27 So if someone, though uncircumcised by background, keeps the morality of the Torah--won't that fact pass judgment upon you who, despite having circumcision and [knowledge of] the written Torah, transgress it?

28 For a Jew is not what a man looks like on the outside; neither is true circumcision that which pertains to an operation on the flesh.

29 But he is a Jew, who is one on the inside; and true circumcision is that of the heart performed by the Spirit, rather than one who has simply had an operation on the flesh to uphold the letter of the Torah. Such a "Jew," whose heart is circumcised, is the one whose praise is not of men, but of God.

1. This is a badly rendered verse, for it is translated in such a way that it sounds like a person who criticizes someone for sin is treated by God as if he committed that sin himself even if he did not. But it actually refers to those who were literally committing the same sin, while they criticized others for the identical thing. (See verses 3 and 4.)
2. In the past verses, Paul has been showing that the moral precepts of the Torah were actually its heart and soul, and that righteous men (in a temporal sense) have the same things in common in their behavior just as unrighteous men do—irrespective of whether or not they are familiar with Mosaic Law. Also, both he and James exhort people to be doers, and not just hearers of the Word, which harkens back to many Old Testament verses, among them Deut. 6:3. Paul is *not*, however, making a theological point that a man in the New covenant is declared righteous by keeping commandments of any sort since no man but Christ ever achieved justification by obedience, and all generations prior to Him utterly failed to keep God's Law to His standards (Malachai 3:7).
3. Paul now confirms that the true Torah—its moral precepts—have always existed in the heart of mankind, for no Gentile, in and of himself, ever concluded independently it was righteous to not trim the corners of one's beard...to not wear clothes of two different materials...to not kindle a fire on the Sabbath. But all men intrinsically know it is wrong to steal, murder, cause harm, commit adultery, and so on. Thus, the conscience of every person, having been placed there by God, lets man know in his heart when he is doing right or wrong, and so Jew and Gentile—with Torah or without Torah—all know they are guilty of sin even if they are otherwise "good" people. All men thus face punishment *for* those sins, and all that remains from that point is how to be reconciled to God. But he also has shown that this conscience can be seared and rendered dead through unrepentant sin (Rom. 1:26).
4. Paul here may be criticizing some Jewish trains of thought that would have held that an Israelite must treat his fellow Jews righteously, but Gentiles are outside the covenant, and so stealing from *them* is not forbidden by the Torah. It actually required a ruling from Gamaliel to formally make it a sin to steal from Gentiles. (Source: Dr. Reuven Hammer, Jewish Theological Seminary.)
5. Possibly a reference to Jews who were accused of despoiling idolatrous temples—who may have pocketed some of their valuables for themselves in the process. Otherwise, Paul may be pointing out that the Jews correctly renounce idolatry, but many of them hypocritically get around their obligations to God through the ordinances of their sages (Matt. 15:3).
6. This verse could be paraphrased as: "*Therefore, if a physically uncircumcised Gentile upholds the righteousness that the Torah teaches, won't that be counted as if he were physically circumcised?*"
7. One could, and should, substitute the word "Christian" for "**Jew**" in this and the previous verse!

ROMANS CHAPTER 3

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?
 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles¹ of God.
 3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief² make the faith of God without effect?
 4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.
 5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)
 6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?
 7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?
 8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.
 9 What then? are we better than they?³ No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;
 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the

ROMANS CHAPTER 3

1 Well, then--what advantage is there in being a Jew? Or what good is there in being circumcised?
 2. There is actually quite a bit. It was to the Jews that the Scriptures and revelations of God were given.
 3 And what if some [of the Jews] were unfaithful? Shall their unfaithfulness cancel out *God's* faithfulness?
 4 God forbid, no! Let God be absolutely true even if *everyone is a liar*. As it is written: **That thou [God] mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.**
 5 But if our unrighteousness helps, by contrast, to show how righteous God actually is--shall we say that God Himself is being unfair if He sends His retribution upon us *for* our unrighteousness? I'm looking at this the way some man might think.
 6 God forbid, no--for how then could God send judgment upon the world [for *its* sin, which He indeed does, and shall do]?
 7 [Some might say:] "If God's truth is shown more clearly by my lie, and thereby brings God glory, why would He send judgment upon me for being a sinner?"
 8 If such a ridiculous statement *were* true, then--as some whose damnation is warranted claim we teach--we *may as well* go on and say: "Let's do evil, because good will ultimately come out of it!"
 9 So--am I saying we Jews are better than the Gentiles? No, not at all, for we have already proven that both Jews and Gentiles are equally condemned as sinners.
 10 As it is written: **There is *none* righteous, no, not one:**
 11 **There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.**
 12 **They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.**
 13 **Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:**
 14 **Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:**
 15 **Their feet are swift to shed blood:**
 16 **Destruction and misery are in their ways:**
 17 **And the way of peace have they not known:**
 18 **There is no fear of God before their eyes.**
 19 Now we know that the [curses, warnings against sin, and other points contained within the Torah] were meant for those who were

poison of asps is under their lips:
 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:
 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:
 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:
 17 And the way of peace have they not known:
 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.
 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.⁴
 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.
 21 But now the righteousness of God without⁵ the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:
 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.
 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.
 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.
 29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:
 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.
 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.⁶

given the Torah, and were expected to be under it! [Why?] So that no one can boast, and that all the world can know mankind is ultimately guilty before God [--even those who have the Torah, and thus have absolute knowledge of what sin is].
 20 Therefore, by the deeds of the Torah [--either the abstaining from sin, or the performance of positive commandments and righteous deeds--] *no human shall ever be placed in right standing with God*, for the purpose of the Torah is to impart the knowledge of sin [leaving men accountable when they see their inability to truly *keep* the Torah].
 21-22 But now the righteousness of God outside of the Torah has been revealed, even though it was actually attested to by the Scriptures and the prophets [*in* the Torah]: the righteousness founded on faith in Jesus Christ, which comes to all, and rests upon all who believe, for all are treated equally.
 23-26 You see, all have sinned, and come short of the perfection of God. Even so, they are placed in right standing with God freely--by His graciousness--through the redemption that comes through Christ Jesus, the agent God sent to take away the penalty for our sins through faith in his blood. God's strategy in this has finally been revealed in our time, so we now understand how God was actually righteous in withholding the deserved penalty for man's sins in the past [and letting the punishment for those sins fall upon Christ instead], thus explaining how He can remain unwavering in His own perfect righteousness when placing in right standing an otherwise condemned sinner who believes in Jesus!
 27 With that understanding, where is our right to boast [about what we have done or can do to be accepted by God]? There is none. That being the case, then by what law is our right to boast excluded? Is it by the Torah, which is based on works [of deeds and obedience, and not faith]? No, not at all. It is by the law of faith.
 28 Thus, we conclude that a man is placed in right standing with God through faith, totally independent of anything he does under Mosaic Law.
 29-30 Since that's so, can we still hold the view that God is the God only of the Jews [and those physically descended from Abraham]? By extension of our conclusions, is He not equally the God of the Gentiles [who must likewise come to Him as do the Jews--through faith]? Yes--on that basis, He must be the God of the Gentiles also, seeing it is the same God who shall place in right standing both the circumcised man and the uncircumcised man through faith [independent of anything else].
 31 But do we make void the Torah in the sense of now having a license to sin because we've come to faith? God forbid! Rather, we actually stand on what the Torah teaches [--the need to come to faith to achieve true righteousness before God!]

1. Referring to the Scriptures and prophecies contained in them.

2. This verse is better understood as: "*For what if some [of the Jews] were unfaithful? Shall their unfaithfulness cancel out God's faithfulness?*"

3. "**They**" are the Gentiles who do not know God, nor follow Torah.

4. Better paraphrased as: "*Now we know that the [curses, warnings against sin, and other points contained within the Torah] were meant for those who were given the Torah, and were expected to be under it! [Why?] So that no one can boast, and that all the world can know mankind is ultimately guilty before God [--even those who have the Torah, and thus have absolute knowledge of what sin is].*"

5. "**Without**" should be translated: "**Outside of,**" "**Apart from,**" etc.

6. In this final verse, Paul condenses about a paragraph's worth of theological teaching into just two sentences, which results in our missing the depth of what he is saying! This is because the sentences, in and of themselves, seem to convey a simple message: that we do not negate the Torah because of faith in Christ, but rather through faith in Him we "**establish**" it.

That sounds fine, but what does that actually mean? Theologians then go on to try to explain Paul's words.

First, some modern day Judaizers claim that Paul is saying that coming to faith in Christ then enables Jew and Gentile to keep all of

Mosaic Law in the proper way through the power of the Holy Spirit, which, though it sounds nice, advances the notion that Paul is saying everyone must thus keep Mosaic Law. That, of course, is a distorted and heretical assumption.

More orthodox Christians speculate that Paul is saying that through faith we put the Law on its proper footing; or that he is making some generalized statement about the true Law being the Law of faith—a fact illustrated in the Old Testament example with Abraham he goes on to cite, which redeems and remakes us into the image of Christ.

The debate centers on the word *histemi*, a derivative of which is translated in the KJV as “**establish**.” *Histemi* is a term for business, and relates to weighing something out in a set of balance scales. Paul typically uses it to mean “stand upon” or “take our stand” on something firm. But because of the KJV’s choice to render it as “**establish**,” this had led to a misunderstanding of the verse by a wide variety of people, especially the cultists. The cultist and false teacher, coming to God through the eyes of Law, perceives this as saying: “Aha! Now that we’ve come to faith in Christ, we must now go keep God’s holy Law!”

Or...

“Now that we’ve come to faith in Christ, God enables us to keep His holy Law in a manner that we can meet His standards of obedience to assure we make heaven!”

These errors spring from reading one verse at a time—because they’re numbered—and isolating each verse individually, trying to understand them *on* an individual basis rather than as a whole, which is how the document is actually written.

But what Paul has actually done here is to sum up his initial points about sin, righteousness, and God’s judgment against sin, be one a Jew who knows the Law or a Gentile who does not. His point is *not* to say that people who come to faith in Christ then go out and perfect their walk by keeping the Law (Gal. 3:3); he is actually saying:

1. That you don’t make void the Law’s warnings against sin simply because you have come to faith, so sin is not allowed (see chapters 1 and 2).
2. That the Law shows our inability to achieve righteousness in God’s eyes, and leads us to Christ for justification.
3. That through faith *in* Christ, we accomplish “**without the Law**” what the Law could not do because it was “**weak through the flesh**,” that being to truly make us righteous in God’s eyes, something that neither it nor man can *ever* do (see the point of chapter 3, particularly verses 21 and 22).

So when Paul ends the chapter by supposedly saying we “**establish the law**” by faith, in no way, shape, or form is he saying “keep the torah,” or “keep the 10 Commandments,” nor is he making reference to keeping *any* law as any part of the righteousness he declares is of faith *alone*—yet “**God forbid**” one use this utter freedom from keeping a law as a license to sin!

But the “**Child of the Flesh**” will never get this, and will always see Paul as saying, “We have come to faith, so we must now go keep (this law or that) or be lost!”

Or, said another way: “Get saved by *grace/stay* saved by Law.”

ROMANS CHAPTER 4

1 What shall we¹ say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.
 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,
 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.
 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.
 9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.
 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.
 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he

ROMANS CHAPTER 4

1 What can we Jews learn from Abraham—our father, physically speaking—about these revelations?
 2 If Abraham was somehow placed in right standing with God on account of something he did, then he obviously had something to boast about. But from God’s view, it was not on the basis of Abraham’s deeds [that he was placed in a position of right standing].
 3 For what did the Scripture say? **Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**
 4 Now to the man who works, his reward is not given out of goodness, but is earned by what the man has done. [In other words, he is entitled to payment for his service.]
 5-8 But to the man who does not work for [and earn] reward, but instead believes on Him who places the ungodly in a position of right standing, his faith is likewise credited as righteousness, even as David illustrated this concept when he wrote in the Psalms about the blessedness of the man upon whom God bestows righteousness independent of his own deeds: **Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.**
 9 [So, with this concept in mind,] does this blessing of imputed righteousness come only upon those who are circumcised, or does it come upon uncircumcised men as well? Remember, we have shown that faith [—and not circumcision and Torah observance—] was the basis upon which *Abraham* was reckoned to be righteous by God.
 10 And when did this reckoning by God occur? After Abraham

had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.²

14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:³

15 Because the law worketh wrath:⁴ for where no law is, there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations⁵;) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

was circumcised? Or before? The answer is: before!

11-12 And he received the sign of circumcision as a stamp of acknowledgment and approval on the righteousness he already had when he was uncircumcised. It was done that way so that Abraham could be appointed both the father of all those *with* faith—even if they are uncircumcised—so that they could be credited with the same righteousness he had, while at the same time he would also be the father of circumcision to all those who *are* physically circumcised, but yet follow in the footsteps of faith that he, himself, had when *he* was still uncircumcised.

13 For the promise that Abraham would inherit the earth was not made to him or his seed through the Torah [which came much later], but was made on the basis of the righteousness obtained through faith.

14 And if those who are his heirs inherit through the Torah, then faith is rendered void, and the promise made to Abraham is nullified.

15 This is unavoidable, because the Torah can only place men in the position to inherit God's wrath [due to man's imperfection]. Thus, only where there is no binding Torah to be observed in the first place can there be no transgressions of it.

16-17 Therefore, the promise is received through faith that it might be given through grace, so that all the heirs can be certain of obtaining the inheritance—and not just those heirs who know the Torah, but also those outside of it with faith like Abraham, who is father to us all because he, himself, believed God, who gives life to the dead and declares things which are not seen yet as if they were already here. That is why the Scripture says about him: **I have made thee a father of many nations.**

18 Thus, Abraham believed against all hope that he would become the father of many nations based on what God had said: [*As the stars in the sky,*] *so shall thy seed be.*

19 Not being the sort of man with weak, superficial faith, he ignored the fact that his body was now impotent—since he was about a hundred years old—and he did not consider the fact that Sarah had gone through menopause.

20-21 Abraham did not weaken his faith by debating in his mind whether or how what God had promised would happen, but through faith he became strong, gave glory to God, and believed, being fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised to do.

22 This belief was thus, “**imputed to him for righteousness.**”

23 Now the words, “**it was imputed to him**” were not meant only for Abraham.

24-25 But that was also written to and about *us*, who will receive the same imputed righteousness if *we* believe on [God] who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was given over to death for our offenses, and then raised again for our justification!

1. Clear evidence Paul is talking not just to Gentiles, but also to Jews.

2. Paul has spent the last few verses clearly outlining that the first righteous man with whom God made an everlasting covenant was Abraham, who obtained that covenant not because he was willing to embrace and follow Torah, but because he was willing to believe and follow a God who asked nothing more of him than to believe His promise. Abraham's act of circumcision was merely a physical memorial to the covenant he had already accepted. Thus, because Abraham was both uncircumcised and non-Torah-observant when God first deemed him righteous, Paul makes the point that an uncircumcised, non-observant Gentile is equally as qualified as Abraham to be deemed righteous if he does what Abraham did: Believe what God had promised.

3. Paul now turns his attention to overturning the presumption that the promises made in Mosaic Law equated with the promises made to Abraham outside of the Torah, for if righteousness and the promises of God come through obeying a list of commandments, then the promise God made to Abraham would be canceled out since he obtained them outside of Mosaic Law, and so did not deserve them through obeying the Torah.

4. By saving the “**Law worketh wrath.**” Paul continues the point he summed up in the last verse of chapter 3—that the Torah.

because of its built-in punishments for transgressions, can:

Never make men holy.

Never reconcile men *fully* to God because of man's inability to fully keep it.

Never result in the promise to Abraham being fulfilled as a reward solely on the basis of keeping Torah, because even the most pious man will constantly face some level of God's wrath because of his shortcomings; and the promise cannot be manifested until a man is fully in God's favor--which cannot happen outside of justification through faith, and the accompanying impartation of a greater righteousness than a man can obtain on his own.

5. This was one of Paul's chief revelations: That Abraham was father not to those physically descended from him, nor to those who entered into the Mosaic covenant, but to those from many nations who would follow his example of simply believing. Also, note that the author has restructured the two verses to read more clearly. A more precise paraphrase would be: *"Therefore, the promise of inheritance is received through faith, that it might be given through grace, so that the heirs can be certain of obtaining the inheritance--and those heirs are not just those who know the Torah, but also those outside the Torah with faith like Abraham, who is father to us all, as the Scripture says: I have made thee a father of many nations--and this because Abraham believed God, who gives life to the dead, and declares things which are not seen yet as if they were already here."*

ROMANS CHAPTER 5

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace^c with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;
 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:
 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
 6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.
 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.
 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.
 12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:²
 13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.)
 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.
 15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.
 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is

ROMANS CHAPTER 5

1 Therefore, being placed in a state of right standing with God through our faith, we have obtained peace with God [and averted our justly-deserved punishment] through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 2 By whom we also--again through faith--have access to the grace by which we stand and rejoice in confidence of someday knowing God's glory.
 3 Not only do we look forward to that, but while we wait, we shout for joy in the trials we endure, understanding that those trials help develop our persistence.
 4 Persistence, meanwhile, molds character, and character develops confidence.
 5 And our confidence is not for nothing, because the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us, has poured out God's love in our hearts.
 6 For when we all were still powerless [and trapped in our sins], at the precise time God appointed, Christ died on behalf of the ungodly.
 7 It's hard enough to find someone willing to lay his life down for a righteous man, though it's possible that someone would be willing to die for a good man.
 8 But God displayed His love for us in that Christ died for all of us while we were still *sinners*!
 9 And now that we are placed in right standing with God through Christ's blood, we will much more be protected from God's coming wrath through Christ.
 10 For if, when we were still in the position of being enemies of God, we were reconciled to God by His son's death, now that we are in that state of reconciliation, we shall be saved [from wrath] by the fact that Christ is alive.
 11 Not only do we enjoy this benefit, but we can also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the agent of our atonement.
 12 Thus, as sin entered the world, bringing death with it because of one man [--Adam--] so death is the natural inheritance of all men descended from him, for all have sinned.
 13 For until the Torah came, there was indeed sin in the world. However, sin is not credited to man's account where there is no Torah.
 14 Even so, death ruled from Adam down to Moses, even over those who had not committed the same sort of transgression as Adam, who prefigured [Christ] who was to come.
 15 But there is no comparison between what Adam passed down to his descendants, and the free gift [that Christ bequeaths to us]. For if death came to many through one man's sin, look how much greater the effect of God's grace has had, coming to so many--in such abundance--through one man, Jesus Christ.

the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.³

20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.⁴

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

16 There is also no comparison between the free gift and the offense of the one man. For judgment, resulting in condemnation, came through the one man, but the free gift [from the other man] restored right standing despite the many offenses.

17 For if--by and through one man's sin of offence--death reigned as king, much more shall they who receive the abundance of God's grace, and the gift of righteousness, have *life* reign in them through another man [and his *righteousness*], Jesus Christ!

18 And therefore, as by the sin of one man, judgment to condemnation came to all men, even so by the *righteousness* of one man--Jesus Christ--the free gift came upon all men, giving them right standing in God's eyes, and life with that!

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of another man shall many be made righteous.

20-21 Moreover, the Torah came in and amplified the point and problem [by defining sin and causing our sin nature to manifest itself more clearly]. But where sin was in abundance, the abundance of God's grace exploded by comparison, so that--as sin has reigned over mankind and resulted in death--even so, grace would eventually rule through righteousness and lead to eternal life through another man, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. Paul does not mean saved people "feel" like they're forgiven; the "**peace**" he refers to is God's being placated, and our averting His wrath through the atonement of Christ.

2. Paul is now going to deal with the issue that even though God did not necessarily hold man fully accountable for sin before the Torah had been given to define what sin was, man was still guilty, and paid the price of death for his transgressions.

3. This is the foundation of the Pauline doctrine of justification: That Christ passed down to us the benefits of righteousness and eternal life just as Adam passed down to his descendants the nature of sin and the wages of death.

4. Verses 20 and 21 go together, and could be paraphrased like this: "*Moreover, the Torah was given to define sin and cause our sin nature to manifest itself more clearly. (See 1 Cor. 15:56.) But where sin was in abundance, God's grace was in greater abundance, so that--as sin has reigned over mankind and resulted in death--even so, grace would eventually rule through righteousness and lead to eternal life through another man, Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

ROMANS CHAPTER 6

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?¹

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.²

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ROMANS CHAPTER 6

1 So what should we conclude then--that we should feel free to commit sin so that God's grace can abound toward us?

2 God forbid! How shall we, who are dead to sin, live in sin any longer?

3 Do you not realize that the many of us, who were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore, we were buried with him through baptism, representing his death, that we should arise to walk in newness of life just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

5 For if we have been grafted together with him and experienced his death, we shall also likewise experience resurrection as he did,

6 Knowing that our old man has been crucified with him in order that our body of sin may be destroyed [along with its propensity to sin], so we might thereafter be freed from serving sin.

7 For he who is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him one day,

9 Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, can no longer die, for death has no power or authority over him.

10 For having undergone physical death one time to deal with sin, he has triumphed over it and now, being alive, he [forever] lives in, with, and to God.

11 In the same way then, consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 Therefore, don't let your sin nature rule over your mortal body and drive you to obey its desires.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.³

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.⁴

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

13 Neither should you yield any part of your body as a tool of unrighteousness, giving into sin—but yield your will to God as someone who is alive from the dead should; and yield every part of your body to be a tool of righteousness to God.

14 For *sin* shall no longer have control over you, seeing you are not under the Torah [and thus trapped in a cycle of sin], but under [the liberation of] God's grace.

15 But does the fact we are no longer under the Torah, but under grace, mean that we are now permitted to go ahead and commit sinful acts that the Torah said were morally wrong? God forbid!

16 Don't you know that you become the slave of whatever master you give yourself over to listen to, whether it be sin leading to and ending in death, or obedience leading to and ending in righteousness?

17 But thank God that while you *were* once the slaves of sin, you ended that when you obeyed from the heart, and conformed yourselves to the doctrine delivered to you.

18 And being freed from the clutches of sin, you became the [willing] slaves of righteousness.

19 I am using human terms [about slaves serving a master] so you can understand me more easily. My point is that as you formerly yielded your bodies to uncleanness, participating in increasingly debase willful transgression after willful transgression—in like manner, you should now yield your body parts to ever-increasing righteousness leading to holiness.

20 For when you were the slaves of sin, you didn't concern yourself with righteousness.

21 What good fruit was there in any of the things you once did that you are now ashamed of? Those things can only lead to death.

22 But now that you have been made free from sin [and its domination over you], and become servants to God, you now have fruit of the choice you made which leads to holiness, and in the end everlasting life.

23 For the final reward for sinning is death, while God's free gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. Then and now, this has been the stumbling block many have encountered in Paul's teachings: mistaking the eagerness of God to forgive, the power of Christ's atonement, and the security of the believer as the basis for being any less stringent in fleeing from sin than the Pharisee who believes he is saved by his own righteousness.

2. There is a whole lot of meat in these verses. Paul's underlying point is that through faith in Messiah and the baptism that confirms us in the faith, we depart from sinful humanity into a state of righteousness before God. How then, he asks, can we walk as though we were yet sinners, living by the dictates of our own flesh? How indeed? Yet all too often, we do!

Beyond this, there is a crucial point in this regarding why the believer is freed from observing Mosaic Law: Even Judaism holds that a dead man is not required to keep the Torah. Paul here may have used Christian baptism as one justification for relieving the Gentiles from the requirement of Torah observance as he alludes to in verse 15. Some, however, view his words as only teaching that it is through grace that we are freed from achieving justification by keeping the Law.

3. Before Christ, even the most righteous man still had an unregenerate spirit. He spent his whole life in a fallen state doing his human best to serve God, while guided by little more than his own conscience. After the Torah was given and sin had been carefully mapped out, far more was required of him to follow God than he had to do before. His fallen nature now began to rebel in ways it did not before, now that it was less free to live by its own dictates. Thus, men now came under the bondage of trying to obey God with their flesh either fighting them every step of the way, or else maneuvering them to a point of self-deception in thinking they had achieved true righteousness through their own discipline and self-control. All the while, man's spirit had yet to be reconciled to God, despite His forbearance regarding sins.

After Messiah, man's spirit had the opportunity to be regenerated into a state of purity and righteousness. From that point, his eternal essence achieved its full justification with God only through God's grace and Christ's sacrifice. Once that had occurred, the Torah became moot in the sense that all it could do was to give knowledge of sin, and regulate behavior. The man himself was saved completely outside of the Torah because of the sacrifice of Christ. And by God's moving men beyond the limitations of the Torah through the element of grace, man's spirit, which was previously unregenerate and indistinguishable from his impure human nature, no longer was tied to his soulful fallen nature, thus averting the extra empowerment toward sin which it knew under the Law before Christ (1 Cor. 15:56).

4. Paul's never-ending problem with his converts was that he just could not get the majority of them to understand or believe they had passed from death to divine life, for they seemed to have a problem walking in the newness of life that had been implanted into their spirits. They were saved, but their stubborn immaturity resulted in their behaving carnally as they continued to walk in

selfishness, lust, etc., while even looking for justification to continue in sin without losing their salvation! Why, you ask? For the same reason most of the Israelites didn't enter the Promised Land. Their carnal minds just plain couldn't understand it, and thus wouldn't believe it, so they behaved as what their rational minds thought they were: Not the righteous of God, redeemed from the power of sin—but simply saved sinners. Had they believed otherwise, they would have focused on seeking God and spending time in fellowship with Him, secure in their relationship, and receiving as an outgrowth of that a more visible representation of Christ in their lives and personalities. The same holds true today.

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?¹

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.²

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid.³ Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.⁴

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.⁵

14 For we know that the law is spiritual:

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

1 Brethren—and I'm talking to the Jews who know the Torah—do you not know that the Torah has authority over a man for as long as he lives [but then its authority over him ends]?

2 For example, a Jewish wife is bound, under the Torah, to reserve herself only to her husband for as long as he is alive. But if that husband dies, she is freed from the responsibility of keeping the various commandments that apply to a married woman.

3 If she were to marry another man while her husband was still alive, for instance, she would be in a state of adultery. But if her husband has died and she becomes free from the obligations that the Torah imposes on her as a married woman, she can marry another man and not be an adulteress.

4 Therefore, my brethren, *you* have become dead, so far as the Torah is concerned, by the body of Christ [who was crucified and died for you to free you from the Torah's authority over you], so that, *you* could marry another husband: the same Jesus who was then raised from the dead, so that we can all bring forth fruit unto God.

5 For [before Christ freed us,] when we were still living in a fleshly, sinful manner, the sinful desires aroused and amplified within us through the power of the Torah impelled our flesh to commit sinful actions to bring forth fruit resulting in death.

6 But we have been delivered from [the power and authority of] the Torah, so that now we are considered dead through and to that which bound us. Thus, we can now serve with a whole new attitude: Not one born from slavish obedience to written commandments, but in the new life of the Spirit.

7 But am I saying that the Torah is sinful? God forbid! For had it not been for the Torah, I would not have realized what sin was [or the depth of sin inside of me]. I would never have known, for instance, my own sense of covetousness and greed had the Torah not said: **Thou shalt not covet.**

8 But the sin hiding inside of me [that I didn't even realize was there otherwise], awakened and came to life from the commandment, and awakened all sorts of impure covetousness in me. For without the Torah, sin is dormant inside of a person [though it is still there, hiding].

9 You see, I was once alive outside of the Torah. But when the commandment [not to covet] was made known to me, sin came to life against it [--empowering my covetous nature--] and thus I died.

10 And the commandment, which was made to teach me what life is, and to lead me *to* life, I found instead only led me into death.

11 For the sin inside of me tricked me by usurping the life meant for me by the commandment, and instead used that life to power its evil effects inside of me, which ultimately caused me to perform the will of sin--and this slew me.

12 And so I want you to know that the Torah itself is holy, and its commandments holy too, just as they are also just, and good.

13 But did the Torah, which is good, function as something *intended* to kill me? [Or am I somehow denouncing the Torah?] God forbid, no! [It's *me* I am denouncing, while *extolling* the Torah!] You see, sin--so that it could be seen for what it is--used that which was a good thing to power its deadly effects and through the commandment cause what was inside of me to come to the surface to be seen so clearly I could not possibly mistake it!

14 For we know that the Torah is spiritual. But I am carnal, and sold

but I am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.⁶

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

to be the slave of sin.

15 I am reminded of this every time I inexplicably find myself unable to do what I know to be right, but instead doing what I hate and know to be wrong!

16 If then I keep doing what I know is wrong and don't want to do [no matter how much I hate it, and no matter how much my conscience convicts me,] I give my affirmation that the Torah itself is good [while I am the one who is bad].

17 But it is not the true Paul who commits sin, but the sin inside of Paul's flesh [that drives him to commit sin].

18 For I know that inside of my flesh there is nothing good whatsoever. For the desire to do good is in my mind, but my body fights me every step of the way, and I don't know how to do good in such a way that both my body and spirit are in full agreement with it.

19 For the good I would like to do, I all too often do not do, but the evil I don't want to do? Well, all too often I do *that*!

20 Now if I do precisely what I don't want to do, it is no longer the true Paul who does that, but the sin still living inside of Paul's flesh.

21 So I find that there is an unbreakable principle at work that when I would want to do good, there is a part of me that is still evil, which wants to oppose that and do something else.

22 For in the deepest parts of me, I delight in God's Torah.

23 But I see an entirely opposite sort of Torah engrafted into the limbs of my flesh, at war with what I purpose in my mind to do, and it drags me into bondage to the law of sin that lives inside of my physical body.

24 O wretched man that I am! Who can deliver me from this dead body that I am chained to and unable to be freed from?

25 And so I thank God that He will through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with my mind I serve the Torah of God, yet with my flesh I still serve the opposite Torah of sin.

1. This is a difficult verse. Some Messianics take the view that this affirms that all must keep Mosaic Law. Others, reading past the first verse to the fourth and sixth, understand Paul to instead be saying the opposite: That through Christ we are freed from the obligation of keeping the Law. However, Paul may actually be returning again to an exegesis of justification through faith, trying again to divorce the Jews in his audience from the notion that they better keep the Torah, and keep it well--"or else." The 'husbands' mentioned in verse 3 allegorically refers first to being bound to justification through Torah and obedience; and secondly, to justification through grace and faith.

2. Here, although we have confirmation that the Christian is freed from having to keep Mosaic Law to be accepted by God, Paul's main point is that we can now serve God without fear. In a sense, he is pointing out that the Jews, even though they "kept" the Law, were still condemned as sinners, so--through baptism--we now "die" with Christ (6:4) and are freed once and for all from the authority the Torah had over mankind, replacing it with the anointing of the Spirit which aids us to walk in "newness of life," naturally fulfilling the morality of God which is not conveyed merely by regulating behavior through a list of commandments.

3. Paul quickly interjects that his revelation about the Torah is not to be taken as condemning the Torah itself as somehow "bad," or that by giving the Law, God somehow forced mankind into becoming sinners by formulating hosts of commandments no one would really like following, knowing all the while that those who even tried to keep them would ultimately fail. Paul instead goes on to reveal in verses 8-13 that the true purpose of the Torah was to clearly reveal the sin nature in humanity, along with humanity's inability to overcome it without divine aid.

4. This sentence is very interesting, for Paul reveals that, despite his fanatical observance of the Torah prior to his conversion, he had a major problem with covetousness that arose by God's simply giving the command not to covet as a principle of life. Paul's rebellious fallen nature then took strength from the commandment and actually impelled him to do the very opposite of what the commandment tried to impart!

5. Here, in verse 13, Paul makes the very conclusion that the Law revealed the innate sinfulness of mankind by focusing in on humanity's natural inclination toward sin and actually strengthening it so that it could be seen more clearly.

6. How appropriate are Paul's words here, and how clearly they illustrate the battle many devout Christians undergo between serving sin and serving righteousness. The irony is, the closer one gets to God, and the more revelations he receives, the greater is the potential for the sin within his fallen nature to rise up and manifest itself! Why? Simply because the closer one gets to God, the closer to the presence of true righteousness he comes, and thereby the more his sin nature is empowered to rebel, just as the existence of the Torah did something similar with much less effect, and just as the presence of Christ brought out what was in the hearts of those He came into contact with (Luke 2:34-35). This is the very reason why the unregenerate can never enter into eternal life--the core being of an unsaved but "good" Jew, Hindu, Moslem, atheist, etc., as it beholds the presence of God's absolute righteousness in eternity, will have his capacity for unrighteousness revealed and amplified to its full potential, akin to the way the redeemed become righteous as Christ is righteous merely by 'seeing Him as He is' (1 John 3:2).

This fact is also one reason why it's possible for a person who has had an abundance of experiences with God to fall so far on occasion.

This is also why Paul wanted to keep the Gentiles as far away from Torah observance as they could possibly get, for the more knowledge they had of the Torah's commandments, and the more they endeavored to keep them, the more the sin in them would

rise up in opposition and actually keep them in bondage!

How does one guard against this? By striving without ceasing to walk in the power and anointing of the Spirit, using the power of the Holy Spirit to combat the flesh. Otherwise, the flesh will overcome the spirit of a man and bring about his downfall, barring intervention by God.

ROMANS CHAPTER 8

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.¹
 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.²
 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.³
 5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.
 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.
 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.⁴
 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.
 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.⁵ Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.
 10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.⁶
 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.
 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.
 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit⁷ do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.⁸
 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.
 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.
 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,⁹
 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the

ROMANS CHAPTER 8

1 Therefore, there is no longer any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus [who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit].
 1 [Alternate reading--Syrian]: Therefore, there is no longer any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus [who, in the flesh, walk after the Spirit].
 2 For the Torah of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has enabled me to become free from the written Torah and the unending sequence of sin and death [that it causes in me].
 3 For what the Torah could not do, because its power was frustrated and perverted by the weakness of my own flesh, God--by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin--condemned sin in the flesh,
 4 So that the righteousness of the Torah might be fulfilled inside of us who walk not according to the flesh, but of the Spirit.
 5 For they who are of the flesh concern themselves with the carnal longings of the flesh, but they who are of the Spirit concern themselves with the things of the Spirit.
 6 You see, to be natural-minded is death, while to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.
 7 For the natural mind is in opposition to God since it does not subject itself to the Torah of God, neither can it.
 8 So then, they who are in the flesh [--that is, in an unregenerate state, as evidenced by their rebellious thinking and behavior--] cannot please God in any way.
 9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if it so be that the Spirit of God lives inside of you. Now if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not one of Christ's!
 10 And if Christ be in you [through the Spirit], your physical body is dead as a result of sin, but your own spirit shall not die with it, but rather will live because of his righteousness.
 11 So if the Spirit of God, who raised up Jesus from the dead, lives inside of you, He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also make your mortal bodies live again by His Spirit, who dwells in you.
 12 Therefore, brethren, we are obligated not to the flesh, to live in the manner of the flesh.
 13 For if you live after the manner of the flesh, you will truly die. But if you, through the [power of] the Holy Spirit, put to death the evil lusts of your body, you will find true life.
 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.
 15 Remember you have not received the spirit of bondage [to mandatory Torah observance] once again so you can live in fear [over your sins]; but you have received the Spirit of adoption that allows us to cry out the word "Daddy!" to God.
 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.
 17 And if we are children, then we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, assuming we suffer with him so that both he and us can be glorified together.
 18 Thus, I reason that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be

glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities¹⁰: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.¹¹

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.¹²

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.¹³

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

revealed in us.

19 For the entire universe eagerly waits for the sons of God to be manifested.

20-21 The whole of creation, you see--against its will--was given over by God to perversion from what it was meant to be so that it would likewise have the same hope of deliverance from its present state, because the universe itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of its corruption into the same glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole universe groans and suffers in birth pains even up to now.

23 And not only that, but we also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inside of ourselves, waiting for the completion of our adoption, which is the redemption [and perfecting] of our body.

24 For we were saved in this hope. But a hope that is seen is not hope--for why would a man be in hope for something he can already see?

25 But if we hope for what we do not see yet, then we endure until we receive it.

26 Likewise, the Spirit partners with us in our [lack of understanding], for we don't know what we need to be praying for as we should. But the Spirit Himself makes intercession [for us] with "groanings" beyond words.

27 And God, who searches the hearts, knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit makes intercession for the righteous according to the will of God.

28 And we know by experience that all things work together for the ultimate good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

29 For those whom God knew from the beginning of time, He also predestined to be conformed into the likeness of His Son, that Christ would be the firstborn among many brothers.

30 Moreover, those God predestined, He also called. And those He called, He also justified. And those He justified, He also glorified.

31 So what should we say then? This: "If God be for us--who can be against us?!"

32 How shall God hold back any [good] things from us, seeing that He spared not His own Son, but was willing to deliver *him* up for us?!

33 So who can make any condemnation of God's elect people [based on their weaknesses and sin] since it is God Himself who justifies them?

34 For who will condemn us, given the fact that Christ died for us--or rather, rose again--and even now is at the right hand of God, pleading our case for us?

35 Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Distress? Persecution? Famine? Nakedness? Peril? Or sword?

36 Remember, it is written: **For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**

37 But no! In all these things we are more than conquerors through [Christ] who loved us!

38-39 For I am fully persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor demonic powers in the heavens, nor things in the present, nor things that will come, nor [mythical astrological influences], nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

1. The words, “**who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit**” are an addition to the text, taken from verse 4, that was added because a little bit of legalism seemed to balance out Paul’s comments, which seemed overly gracious otherwise.
2. The “**law of sin and death**” is commonly viewed as a synonym for *Mosaic Law*. There is some problem with this in that Paul, as a Jew, would never hold that the Torah was a “bad” thing. But in one sense, pointing out that the Torah was a vehicle that ultimately brought condemnation to humanity is perfectly appropriate. Paul’s chief point, though, is to illustrate the notion that through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, reconciliation and life are produced in the believer, in comparison to the Torah, which reveals mankind’s sinfulness and inability to attain true righteousness. In fact, since the “**strength of sin is the law**,” (1 Cor. 15:56), Paul again reveals that the Torah, by its very existence, brings out man’s sinful nature and actually empowers him to sin by arousing and amplifying man’s fallen spirit to clearly show its existence through its desire to disobey! Through Messiah, however, that circle is broken as the spirit of man is regenerated. Thus, while mankind’s unredeemed flesh still manifests its variance with God through its continuing desire to sin, the cycle of *desire to sin + sinful actions = physical and spiritual death* is broken, for the man’s spirit is redeemed and reconciled to God apart from his fallen nature so long as he continues to accept through faith Christ’s atonement for the sins that will still haunt him all the days of his life. And so the cycle in the life of the redeemed now is: *Desire to do right + sinful actions = physical death, but eternal life through Christ!*
3. Paul absolutely does not mean that the “**righteousness of the law**” is in any way appropriated by “not walking after the flesh”—i.e., through holy living! This has been the downfall of many “Christian” denominations that return to the trap the Pharisees fell prey to, substituting carnal self-control and carnal repentance from sin over true Spirit-empowerment. While it’s always good and proper to avoid sin, the Spirit’s activity in our lives is never activated as a result of simple repentance! He only becomes active and noticeable as we seek God in faith, and respond to the Spirit’s leading—and not as any sort of recompense for simple repentance or adoption of a Christian lifestyle! Paul is therefore saying that those who walk “**according to the Spirit**” are those who are doing that as a fruit of the Spirit’s presence, not through their own efforts at repentance. How do we know Paul isn’t merely referring to the choices one makes, whether good or bad? By verses 5 and 14, which show it’s not a question of simply doing good or evil, but rather a question of what (or Who) is leading and empowering the Christian, who then undertakes good or evil actions as an outgrowth of Who or what he is following. Thus, the Spirit can never grow or manifest His presence because of what one does; He only manifests as one yields to His prompting, and thus He becomes more noticeable as one yields to Him. (See also the commentary on Acts 5:32.)
4. How critical is this verse to Christians, yet its full implications are so often unrecognized. Paul is not just talking about a mind that seeks after sin, but he is acknowledging that the whole of mankind’s human logic and wisdom is incapable of comprehending or receiving God’s truth.
5. Note Paul’s words here confirming that we are in the Spirit not through repentance and lifestyle, but through His indwelling presence!
6. This is a somewhat confusing verse. It could be paraphrased more along the lines of: “*And if Christ be in you [through the Spirit], your physical body is dead as a result of sin, but your own spirit shall not die with it, but rather will live because of his righteousness.*” It is yet another indictment against “soul sleep.”
7. Here then, is the heart of true sanctification and godly living: the power of the Spirit. It is through Spirit-empowerment that one ultimately breaks free of propensity and slavery to sin. This all goes back to Genesis, where God revealed He had created two lights in the heavens: The greater light of the sun, and the lesser light of the moon. The moon has no light whatever in itself; it can only reflect the light of the sun. So too, we were created to reflect the communicable attributes of God through the indwelling of the Spirit. This is why so many religions and denominations fall short of true spirituality. Even some good denominations fail to grasp that it is only through Spirit-empowerment that true sanctification takes place—and so they substitute repentance and adopting an outwardly godly lifestyle for the true life that only comes *through the Spirit*.
8. How one could wish that Christianity could understand that the covenant of Christ is a covenant of adoption and not a covenant of servanthood! The first covenant was that of slavery and servanthood, in which God approved or disapproved, or accepted or rejected a person on the basis of his lifestyle and obedience. The New covenant is one of adoption, where God can never accept or reject a person based on how godly he manages to live. God can only accept or reject a man on the basis of his belief or unbelief in His Son’s atonement. This is why the line between sanctification and legalism is nearly impossible to see without the enlightenment of the Spirit, and why the effects of man’s sanctification are pointless unless done under the *unction* of the Spirit. Here are some examples:
 A man hears a minister ask how someone can call himself a Christian if he only attends services once a week since the Bible says ‘**not to forsake the assembly of ourselves together.**’ So he feels guilty and starts attending Wednesday night prayer meeting and Sunday night services as well. That’s great—but there’s no righteousness in that.
 A woman hears a Holiness preacher chastise women for looking “too much like the world,” and so she throws away any clothing with style, and starts wearing obnoxiously long dresses with no makeup so God will be pleased with her. That’s fine—but there’s no righteousness in that.

These are examples of people in bondage to works, who have been conned into substituting a so-called godly lifestyle over reflecting Christ’s righteousness through the Spirit. God’s Spirit could move on a person to do any or all of these things at a specific time, for a specific purpose, and under a specific anointing to do them. But the difference is that the one who does these things under the unction of the Spirit, rather than because of his own guilty conscience, is the one who is truly being conformed into the image of Christ, because the Spirit is leading him, while the other person is being led by his own flesh—and the flesh, Paul notes, profits “**nothing.**”

9. Another tough verse by Paul. He is probably saying that the inbred flaws and frustration that nature and mankind endure has come upon them to show the need for a redeemer as he alludes to in verse 22.
10. “**Infirmities,**” while an acceptable translation (though “**weakness**” is better), probably fails to convey Paul’s true thoughts here. The word *astheneia* is related to *astheneo*, a word used in Rom. 14:1 regarding someone who is “**weak**” in the faith. Paul’s use of the word *there* refers to someone who lacks intellectual knowledge of the faith, and thus is still bound by some extraneous points of Jewish Law. Since Paul twice uses *astheneo* in Romans to refer to someone in this state of insufficient knowledge, his use of *astheneia* here can reasonably be inferred as stating that the Spirit helps us not in our *weakness* or *frailty*, but in our *lack of understanding*, which fits perfectly with the rest of the sentence. By the way, some texts of Romans use the singular *astheneo* here.

11. Possibly a reference to praying in Tongues. The point should also be made that some non-Trinitarians attempt to use the fact that Paul calls the Spirit an "it" in this verse, to deny the Personhood of the Spirit. Actually, "itself" is used because of a flaw in the Greek language. Since the word for *Spirit* is neuter, unlike it is in Hebrew, it technically requires the usage of "itself" over "himself." It is thus not a theological statement by Paul that the Holy Spirit is an *it* rather than a *He*.
12. A favorite verse quoted at funerals. But its main point is to say that God may not necessarily send death, pain, and strife into His children's lives, but He makes use of all circumstances, good and bad, when those who follow Him remain faithful.
13. Better paraphrased as: "*Who can make any condemnation of God's people based on their weaknesses and sin since it is God Himself who justifies them?*"

ROMANS CHAPTER 9

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,
 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:
 4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;
 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.
 6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:
 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.
 8 That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.
 9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.
 10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;
 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)
 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.
 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.
 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.
 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.
 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.
 17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.
 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.
 19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?¹
 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?
 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the

ROMANS CHAPTER 9

1 What I am about to say is the truth in Christ, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost:
 2 I have great heaviness and constant sorrow in my heart.
 3 For I could even wish that I were accursed from Christ for my brother Jews,
 4 All of whom are Israelites--and the people adopted by God; who were the ones who saw God's glory [on Mt. Sinai and upon the tabernacle]; who received the covenants and the Torah; who had the honor of ministering to God as priests; who were the ones in line to inherit God's promises;
 5 Who are descended from the Patriarchs; and from whom, so far as physical descent goes, Christ came, who is preeminent over all things--God--blessed forever! Amen.
 6 [Now despite their current situation,] this does not mean that the decree of God has somehow failed to come to pass. You see, not everyone in the physical family of Israel is considered by God to actually *be* a part of Israel.
 7 Neither does mere physical descent from Abraham make them all true children of Abraham. Remember the Scripture: **In Isaac shall thy seed be called.**
 8 This meant that the children that came from Abraham's human efforts at procreation [--Ishmael, and those descended from him--] were not deemed to be the children God promised. Instead, the children that came out of *Isaac*, the child of promise, are the ones God acknowledges as the children.
 9 For this was the promise in question: **At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.**
 10 Not only this, but the principle was again shown when Rebecca conceived [her own child of promise] by our ancestor Isaac.
 11 For before her children were even born, and before either had done anything good or bad, that the plan of God--independent of deeds, but through sovereign election alone on the part of Him who issued the call--might be accomplished,
 12 It was told her, "The older child shall serve the younger one."
 13 As it is written: **Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.**
 14 What shall we say then? That God is unfair? God forbid, no!
 15 For God told Moses: **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.**
 16 So then, it is not a question of he who wants [the blessing], or of he who runs [in order to *get* the blessing]. It is a question of to whom God chooses to show mercy.
 17 The Scripture also notes this concept elsewhere when it points out that Pharaoh was told: **Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.**

same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?
 22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted² to destruction:
 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,
 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?
 25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.
 26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.
 27 Esaiahs also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:
 28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.
 29 And as Esaiahs said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.
 30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.³
 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.
 32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;
 33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

18 Therefore, God will show mercy to whomever He chooses; and He will harden whom He will harden.
 19 Now you might say to me, "Well, why does God condemn me if I'm only doing what He forces me to do through His own sovereign will? No one can resist that!"
 20 No, sir—who are you to question God? Shall the thing created say to its creator, "Why did you make me like this?"
 21 Doesn't the potter have the power to make either a plain bottle or a beautiful vase from the same lump of clay?
 22-24 What if God, though wanting and planning to show His wrath, and to make His power known to people, patiently put up with those people destined for His wrath and being perfected for destruction, so that He could make known the riches of His glory on those people He prepared beforehand to receive His *mercy*—even us, whom He has called not just from the Jews, but from the Gentiles too?
 25 As He said in Hosea: **I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.**
 26 **And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.**
 27 Isaiah also said, concerning Israel: **Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:**
 28 **For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.**
 29 And Isaiah even said earlier: **Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.**
 30-31 So what shall we say, other than that the Gentiles, who did not seek righteousness, actually found it through faith, while Israel, which followed after the Torah of righteousness, missed the whole point, and never achieved righteousness!
 32 Why did they never achieve it, you ask? Because they did not seek it by faith, but instead by their deeds and obedience based on the Torah. You see, they stumbled on the stumbling block that God foretold.
 33 As it is written: **Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

1. Verses like this have given birth to a teaching that God is so in control of all the universe that He applies an irresistible will to force all things to do exactly what He wants, including causing men to sin. This notion is debatable, and part of a big argument over the form and basis of Predestination, which often is the most divisive thing to argue about in the whole of Paul's writings.

2. This word means something like assembling a jigsaw puzzle or repairing a broken vessel. Beyond that, this whole chapter is misused by those with an unhealthy view of Predestination to conclude God destines some people for damnation, and exerts an irresistible will to conform them into vile sinners in order to pour out His wrath upon them in eternity so that the redeemed can appreciate what He has saved them from. Homosexuals in particular are singled out by some as examples of this, but the truth as shown in the beginning of Romans, and elsewhere, is that in some cases God abandons the stubborn rebels, withdraws conviction from them, and gives them over to a reprobate mind, allowing them to *debase themselves* in sin, maximizing their own damnation by their own free will, unhindered by the Spirit's conviction, not by some capricious role on His part through conscious design.

3. Paul here draws out the irony that the Gentiles, who in ages past rejected following God, actually came to embrace the path of true righteousness through faith, while the Jews, who accepted God's commandments, wound up rejecting true righteousness. There are a variety of reasons why Israel failed so completely: Primarily, it was because the Jews, as a people, were never any better than the Gentiles, and age after age tended to reject God and the prophets—and the final fruit of that continuous rejection was the rejection of the Messiah Himself.

ROMANS CHAPTER 10

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.
 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

ROMANS CHAPTER 10

1 [Even so,] brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God is that Israel would [come to the truth, and] be saved.
 2 For I admit they have a zeal for God, but a zeal not based on correct knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.¹

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)²

7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?³

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.⁴

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

3 For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to counterfeit it by standing on their own Torah observance, have not submitted to the [true] righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the ultimate personification of all that the Torah points to: the very *source* of righteousness to everyone who places faith in him!

5 For Moses described the righteousness of the *Torah* in this way: **The man which doeth those things shall live by them.**

6 But the [true] righteousness that comes from faith speaks this way: **Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?** [That is, to say: "I will earn heaven through my own righteousness."] This dethrones Christ from his exalted position of Lord and Savior at God's right hand, making him only a favored human man.

7 Nor does it say, **Who shall descend into the deep?** [That is, to say: "I will atone for my own sins in *Sheol*, and then enter into eternal life."] This brings Christ up from the grave [negating the truth and power of his resurrection and Lordship, and again making him nothing more than a dead human prophet who must be atoning for his own sins in *Sheol*].

8-9 But what does the attitude of true righteousness say? **The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.** That is, the "**word**" about *faith* we preach: That if you will 'confess with your mouth,' *Jesus is Lord*, and you shall 'believe in your heart' that God has *raised him from the dead*, you will be saved!

10 For with the heart, man believes and receives righteousness. And with the mouth, confession is made to salvation.

11 For the Scripture says: **Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord of both is rich toward all who call upon Him.

13 For: **Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

14 But how shall people call upon him if they have not believed on him? And how can they believe on him if they have not heard of him? And how can they hear, unless they hear someone preach about him?

15 And how shall anyone preach about him unless they are sent? As it is written: **How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!**

16 But they have not all obeyed the Gospel message, for Isaiah said: *Lord, who has put faith in what we said?*

17 So then one's faith comes by hearing, and hearing by someone's proclaiming the Message of God.

18 But I ask: Haven't they already heard? Yes, truly they have, for: **Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.**

19 And I ask: Did Israel, though it heard the message, understand it? For Moses himself said originally: **I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.**

20 And Isaiah later spoke boldly [about the Gentiles,] saying: **I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me,**

21 While he said about Israel: **All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.**

1. This is a grossly misunderstood verse. Paul is not saying, "The Torah has come to an end because Messiah has come." "**The end of the Law**" must be understood as, "the goal of the Law," "the ultimate embodiment of the Law," "the ultimate form of righteousness," etc. Yes, Paul affirms the Law is fulfilled and "**abolished**" (2 Cor. 3:11,13), but not in *this* passage.

2. Paul here is regularly criticized by Jews for “misquoting” Deut. 30: 11-13.

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

The accusation has no basis, for Paul is employing traditional Jewish methods of teaching in that he uses a *p'shat*: Citing part of a verse, which in Judaism was meant to call the hearer's attention to the *whole* of the verse. Thus, every Jew to whom this epistle came knew these verses by heart, and it would have been impossible to fool any Jewish listener were Paul's intent to distort the Scriptures! Gentiles could have been conned, but Gentiles could have cared less about the Jewish Scriptures to begin with.

Having used a *p'shat* to call to mind the surface text and its direct context of meaning, Paul goes on to make a *sod*, illustrating a deeper, more metaphysical, message he perceives beneath the surface text. Certainly, not every Jew would have agreed with his exposition, but the method he is using, far from being an intentional distortion of Scripture, is wholly rabbinic. And if *Paul* is somehow “cheating” by what he's doing, what criticism should Judaism thus make toward the *Chassidim* who make such “cheating” into a consummate art form?! Thus, Jewish criticism of Paul is, at best, misplaced, and, at worst, utterly hypocritical.

The point must now be addressed about Paul's apparent omission of part of verse 13, which seems to say that the Jews can keep a Torah Paul has denied they can keep! Judaism also loves to pounce on this one as “proof” of Paul contradicting what God says in the Old Testament.

So what is the truth?

Well, the fact is both sides have some truth going for them. The problem is that Judaism, once again, is ignorant of what Paul's philosophical approach to keeping the Torah is.

Paul's point was always that no human could “keep the Torah” in such a way that he could earn eternal life on the basis of how well he had obeyed the commandments, independent of Messiah's sacrifice for his sins and failings. (However, in verse 7, he seems to also be criticizing a purgatory-like belief in Judaism, then and now, that people can be punished for their sins in *Sheol*, and then enter into eternal life after atoning for those sins. Verses 6 and 7 are otherwise the most confusing verses Paul wrote, and it is impossible to make a dogmatic assertion on what he means.)

No Jew, for instance, would have accepted the notion that a man could so keep the Torah that he could refuse to make a sacrifice on *Yom Kippur*, relying on his flawless keeping of the *mitzvot* to exempt him from the need to sacrifice for his failings over the year. Thus, even Judaism itself acknowledges no one can keep the Torah flawlessly, year after year, without the need to seek God's forgiveness of sin. And so, Judaism and Paul are in agreement on that.

Where the two part company is on the basis of forgiveness of sin, and what constitutes true justification with God. Paul says the forgiveness is accomplished on the basis of Christ's sacrifice, and reconciliation is obtained by grace through faith *in* that sacrifice. Judaism instead believes reconciliation is obtained through repentance and devotion to the Torah; and forgiveness is obtained through prayer and penance.

Thus, both Paul and Judaism agree no one can keep the Torah flawlessly, but both could agree it can be “kept” in a general sense.

This is therefore Judaism's lesser “truth”: That, as God says here, the 613 commandments of the Torah (now whittled down to around 180 since there is no Temple or priesthood), are theoretically possible to keep as a way of life and in a general sense.

But even if we agree the Torah could be kept in a general sense, did the Jews *keep* it in a general sense? No! The entire history of the Old Testament, with a handful of exceptions for when the people had a godly king, is a history of the Jews rejecting the Torah, falling into idolatry, rejecting the prophets, rejecting the Sabbath, rejecting the Messiah, rejecting the Messiah's apostles, and establishing their own parameters of the Jewish religion based on the notion that the sages have a God-given right to determine what Judaism is, and how it is to be followed. And, from a Christian perspective, even those Jews who did keep the Torah—and who kept it “**blamelessly**” (like Zacharias and Elisabeth)—did not, and could not, keep it perfectly enough to be acceptable to God outside of Messiah's sacrifice for their failings and sins.

How do we know that?

By virtue of the fact that all the righteous dead went not to God's presence in heaven, but to the holding tank of Abraham's Bosom in *Sheol*, where they awaited Messiah to redeem them and take them into God's presence (Ephesians 4:8-10, 1st Peter 3:19).

Thus, Paul is not contradicting what God says; it is Judaism that never understood what God meant, substituting its own religious construct in place of God's actual plan.

3. Absolute proof against the notion that non-Christians who never hear and respond to the Gospel can somehow be saved.

4. This absolutely does *not* mean, “Faith coming by hearing, and hearing BY THE BIBLE!” One of the greatest deceptions the devil has maneuvered the church into is the notion that the term “**word of God**” should automatically be viewed as a synonym for *the Bible*! In the 40 or so places in the New Testament where the phrase “**the word of God**” is used, you can count on one hand the times this should be translated as a synonym for *the Scriptures*. The predominant New Testament use of the term refers to something akin to the old town crier who would ring a bell, and cry out, “Hear, ye! Hear, ye!” Then he would read off a proclamation by the king. So when the term “**the word of God**” is used in the New Testament, it refers to:

The Messiah.

God's message.

God's command.

God's decree.

And finally, in rare instances, to the Scriptures.

Thus, Paul is not saying here that one builds his faith up by studying Scripture, or by somehow learning what the Bible supposedly promises the believer. True faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, dispensed at God's command, enabling a man to have the spiritual darkness lifted, and the light of God's truth to penetrate his thinking. From that point, all man can do is fight against the unbelief his flesh will bring against what God has spoken. He might well do some positive confession or praise against what his flesh is telling him, but the faith that can literally accomplish miracles always, in one form or another, comes from God either in seed form or in fullness of manifestation:

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through

the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. 2. Peter 1:1.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Rom. 12:3.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Eph. 2:8.

...To another faith by the same Spirit. 1 Cor. 12:9.

Now a lot of people in the Faith movement misunderstand the primary nature of miracle-working faith by verses like these:

Jesus answered, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. Matt. 21:21

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Mark 11:23.

Yet while these verses are infallibly true, they're qualified in at least two places:

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. John 15:7.

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. James 4:3.

And so, while man might possess his own carnal innate "faith," that faith, in and of itself, is not sufficient to work the miracle power of God, for anything that comes from man, apart from the Spirit, can do "nothing"! What God can, and does do, is empower man's carnal faith and energize it (in a sense, regenerate it as he does man's fallen spirit) through the Spirit, to where it can enact the supernatural. The qualification is that the man must be acting under the leading of the Spirit, working within the parameters of what God has called him to do. God thereafter anoints his faith into action. Here is an example:

Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. Ezekiel 37:4,7.

The bones did not arise because of Ezekiel's strong faith or because he spoke his own faith-filled words; they arose because God anointed Ezekiel to bring about something He decreed should be done.

Ezekiel's own level of faith very clearly did not exceed simple obedience. Yet this was enough faith to enact the miracle (even though it was in a vision) because Ezekiel was working within the parameters God established for him. In the same way, a Christian, under the anointing and revelation of the Spirit, might speak forth (that is, deliver God's heavenly decree) a command for a miracle to happen, but that will happen only because he is acting in accord with God's direct will, and his faith to enact the miracle will come from the Spirit.

Thus, it makes no difference whether one is a faith giant or Doubting Thomas in so far as how much faith he needs to enact the miracle power of God. This is why Jesus said one needs no more than faith the size of a mustard seed. The qualification is, the person must be acting in accord with something God has already decided to do. It's therefore not a question of seizing some promise in Scripture and then confessing it into existence; it's a question of God first decreeing something from heaven and the Christian then exercising his energized faith to bring it about, although it is possible for a man "standing in faith" to see God move in his situation, not by energizing his human faith, but as a reward for his belief. God will sometimes do that to teach a person to believe He will do what He has said He would, despite what circumstances would seem to dictate. But there is nothing supernatural about the faith involved in this sort of miracle. About all a man can do in this sort of scenario is to avoid slipping into doubt and unbelief. In connection with this, one factor man *does* have control over is whether or not he refuses to believe what God has said. In those circumstances, a faith giant is a world ahead of a Doubting Thomas in combating unbelief, for contrary to the teachings of some, unbelief on the part of man absolutely curtails God's willingness and ability to work (Matt. 13:58)!

So if Paul says: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," his greater truth is that man's faith and understanding is energized by God decreeing and enacting it through the Spirit. At best, it is only a lesser truth that a man is "pumped up" in his faith by study of the Scripture, etc. (Having said that, however, one can argue whether Paul even means to deal with faith in the sense we have been talking about. He could well be referring to it only in the sense of one coming to faith in Christ for salvation. This idea is reinforced by virtue of the fact that some texts read "word of Christ," rather than "word of God," here.) Following are some examples of how the phrase "The word of God" is actually used in the New Testament. It should take only a moment to realize that making the term a synonym for the Scriptures, as Christianity has done, has all but dismissed God's actual use of the phrase.

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. Mark 7:13.

Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. Luke 3:2.

And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Luke 4:4

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:31.

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Hebrews 11:3.

Having made all these points, I must add one more--that the word "God" isn't in the best texts here, but "Christ" is.

ROMANS CHAPTER 11

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people?
God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the
seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
2 God hath not cast away his people which he

ROMANS CHAPTER 11

1 But I ask: Has God cast away His people? God forbid! For I
am an Israelite myself, descended from Abraham, of the tribe
of Benjamin.
2 No, God has not cast away His people, whom He foreknew.

foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars¹; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.²

6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.³

7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber,⁴ eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them:

10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.⁵

12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?⁶

16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.⁷

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness:

Do you not remember what the Scripture mentions about an incident in the life of Elijah? How he tried to intercede against Israel, and said to God:

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

4 But what was God's answer to him? **I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.**

5 So even now, at this present time, there is [--and will always be--] a remnant of Israel in right standing with God, according to His election through His grace.

6 And since it is through grace, it is not of deeds, or else grace would no longer be grace. [Thus, if this remnant exists because of their deeds, then it is not a remnant through God's grace.]

7 So what does this mean, you ask? It means that Israel as a whole did not obtain what it sought for, but the elect [--predestined by God through His grace--] *did* obtain it, and the rest of Israel was blinded.

8 This was in keeping with what was written: **God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear**, even to this day.

9 David also said: **Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them: 10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.**

11 I ask: Have they stumbled because God wanted them to fall altogether? God forbid! But He allowed them to fall so that through their fall, salvation could [legally--without compromising God's unchanging nature--] come to the Gentiles, to provoke Israel itself to jealousy [so the nation would repent].

12 And if their fall has resulted in greatly enriching the rest of the world, and their diminishment has enriched the Gentiles too--how much more will be gained by their eventual fullness [in Christ]?

13-14 My points here have been made especially to you Gentiles since I am the apostle to the Gentiles. As such, I take full advantage of my position and ministry if by some means I may provoke some of my fellow countrymen into jealousy, and thus save some of them.

15 For if Israel's casting away [the Messiah] results in the world being reconciled under him to God--what shall their receiving [of the Messiah] do? Why, it will bring about the resurrection of the dead [and the return of Christ]!

16 For if the firstfruits [of the bread offering] is holy, the entire lump of dough is holy; and similarly, if the root is holy, so are the branches that sprout from it.

17 And if some branches were broken off so you Gentiles, being the same as a wild olive branch, could be grafted onto a cultivated olive tree, and so with the true branches be nourished by the sap of that olive tree,

18 Don't think yourself better than the branches that were broken off. If you do, then remember that you don't uphold the root, but the root upholds you!

19 Now you might say, "The branches were broken off so I could be grafted in."

20 True, because of their *lack* of faith they were broken off, and you stand *by* faith. But don't be proud of that, but fear!

21 For if God didn't spare the natural branches, be careful, lest He not spare you either!

22 So keep in mind both how good God can be, and also how stern. Those who fell away saw how stern He can be. But you see His good side, provided you continue [--through faith--] to

otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?⁸

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.⁹

26 And so all Israel shall be saved:¹⁰ as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

32 For God hath concluded¹¹ them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

abide in that goodness, otherwise you will be cut off too.

23 And they also, if they overcome *their* lack of faith, shall be grafted back in, for God can easily graft them back onto their own olive tree.

24 For if you were taken out of a wild olive tree and grafted onto a cultivated olive tree [--which no one would ever do normally--] how much more will the Jews, who are the natural branches, be grafted back onto their own olive tree?

25 For I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, about this mystery, lest you become wise through your own arrogance: You see, spiritual blindness has fallen upon the segment of Israel that is not elect, until God has finished bringing all the Gentiles He will call into His kingdom.

26 And so [--with the Gentiles coming in first, and finally the Jews at the end--] all Israel will be saved. For it is written:

There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

28 Now presently, Israel is your enemy as regards the Gospel. But as regards their role in God's election, they are beloved for the sake of the Patriarchs.

29 For God does not repent of his gifts and calling.

30-32 For as you Gentiles in times past did not believe and obey God, but found mercy through Israel's own unbelief and rebellion, likewise Israel is now in a similar state of unbelief, that through the undeserved mercy shown you, they may obtain the same sort of mercy [when God is ready to deliver them]. For God has caught all Israel up in a similar state of unbelief so that He can [show the exact same mercy toward them as He did the Gentiles, and save them]!

33 How incredible are the depths of God's wisdom and knowledge! How unfathomable are His plans; and how beyond comprehension are His ways of doing things!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For everything comes from Him. Everything exists through Him. And everything is made for Him, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

1. Ralph Earle points out an interesting fact that in this quote from the Septuagint, the word for "**altars**" refers to places of blood sacrifice and burnt offering, showing that Elijah and the prophets of his day sacrificed to God in places other than the Temple, which was the one place mandated in the Torah.

2. Verses 4 and 5 are important, illustrating God's sovereign dealings with the Jewish people, and how He, despite their rejection of Messiah, will always somewhere, someplace, reserve a remnant of Jewish believers who will be the recipients of His grace, giving them eyes to see and ears to hear the Gospel.

3. The second sentence in verse 6 is an addition to the text.

4. The "**spirit of slumber**" is when the eyes of faith are closing or shut tight, making one unable to believe and understand. Though it is offensive to Judaism, Paul notes that because of Israel's hardness of heart, God has "**given**" the Jews over to this sort of blindness and spiritual deception, resulting in their remaining content and secure in their unbelief and rejection of Christ.

5. While some find this verse confusing in that the Jews have never seemed jealous of Christians or Christianity in any way--in fact, it shows the depth of deception the Jewish people have fallen prey to. Their hearts are so hard that they are virtually incapable of feeling the jealousy they *should* feel! For, as Paul is pointing out, the miracles and power of the Holy Spirit being done within the community of (primarily Gentile) believers of his day should have pricked their collective conscience--but did not.

6. A very important verse showing that the second coming of Christ will happen when the Jews--specifically its leaders--realize who He was, and say, "**Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.**" (Matt. 23:39) This verse otherwise is often incorrectly translated and understood as Israel's being what is "**cast off.**" While the text does flow naturally with that understanding, it would be a direct contradiction to verse 1! Even so, only a few Bibles (two that I know of) render it as I likewise do here. It should also be noted that Paul does not use the word *resurrection* here, and some theologians, limiting themselves to the phrase "**life from the dead,**" view Paul as only saying that Israel's "**receiving**" will mean that the Jews will have new life breathed into them as a people, once they have accepted Christ. While that statement is true so far as it goes, Paul cannot be limiting himself to only discussing Israel's regeneration. Jesus Himself (Matt. 23:39) prophesied that when the Jews received Him as Messiah, He would return to the earth. Since we know that Paul also affirms that the resurrection of the dead and the return of the righteous dead to the earth occur at

Christ's return (1 Cor. 15:23), Paul's words must be inclusive of regeneration, resurrection, and the return of Christ. The author doesn't believe Paul could have somehow failed to note those facts are interrelated, hence the rationale for substituting the word *resurrection* for "**life**" in the paraphrase, in the belief that Paul was being inclusive of all these factors, the capstone of which is the resurrection and return of Christ to the earth.

7. The Christian church has, unfortunately, fallen into its own spiritual deception over the centuries. One form of this deception manifests itself in the doctrine of Replacement Theology, which holds that the Christian church has replaced Israel. Paul here quickly squashes that notion by pointing out that the Gentile Christian church is the newcomer being allowed to be grafted into the root of Israel, not that the church itself is the root to which Israel is allowed to come to, cap in hand, to submit to Gentile pre-eminence.

8. It should be noted that no one grafts a wild olive branch to a healthy cultivated olive tree, for the wild olive has an inferior taste. This illustrates God's grace toward the Gentiles, to whom Christ reached out on the cross.

9. Contrary to what some would like to think, there is a time when God will end His activities with the Gentiles to reach out and restore the majority of natural Jews to fellowship through the revelation of the Spirit.

10. This verse appears to be saying that God will supernaturally rip the blindness away from the Jews, resulting in mass repentance once He has finished His outreach to the Gentiles.

11. The word "**concluded**" means to catch in a net. Paul is saying God has in effect separated much of His grace from the Jews in order to reach out to the Gentiles until He has finished His outreach to them.

ROMANS CHAPTER 12

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,¹ that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;²

7 Or ministry, let us wait³ on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity⁴; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

9 Let love be without dissimulation⁵. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

11 Not slothful in business⁶; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant⁷ in prayer;

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.⁸ Be not wise in your own conceits.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.⁹

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

ROMANS CHAPTER 12

1 Therefore, I beseech you, brethren—because of the mercies of God—to offer up your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is logically how to worship and serve Him [as His priests on earth].

2 And don't let the world mold you into *its* image, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds to God's way of thinking. Then you will prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

3 Through the grace given to me, I warn every man among you not to think too highly of himself. Measure yourselves sincerely, each of you as has received a measure of faith from God.

4 For as our bodies have many limbs, and all limbs do not have the same function,

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each of us are fellow limbs of that body.

6 And since we have different gifts, according to the grace that has been given to us, let us use them. If we can prophesy, let us do so in proportion to the faith we have been given.

7 If we have a ministry, let us perform that ministry. If we can teach, let us teach.

8 If a man can exhort, he should exhort. If a man can give, let him give out of sincere compassion. If a man has been placed in leadership, let him lead diligently. If a man is in a place to show mercy to another, let him do that cheerfully.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil, and hold on to what is good.

10 Show affection and love to each other as brothers should: With honor, esteeming everyone else more than himself.

11 Don't be apathetic, but be zealous in serving the Lord.

12 Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be steadfast in praying.

13 Help the poorer brethren. Be known for hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you. Bless—don't curse!

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

16 Treat everyone equally, and don't regard the rich and influential better than you do the common man. *Don't be wise in your own arrogance.*

17 Don't return evil for evil, but rise above that by living an honest and noble lifestyle in the sight of all men.

18 If it is possible, as much as you are able, live in peace

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, don't be your own judge and jury, and take vengeance for wrongs; leave vengeance to God, for it is written: **Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.**

20 Therefore, *if your enemy hungers, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him water, for in so doing this, you will heap coals of fire upon his head.*

21 Don't let evil overcome *you*, but you overcome evil with good.

1. By the 'renewing of one's mind,' Paul is referring to yielding the way one thinks to the promptings and enlightenment of the Spirit, which his mind has already been given (1 Cor. 2:16), and exchanging his carnal concerns for himself for those of others.
2. "Prophecy" here does not mean to stand up and say, "Thus saith the Lord." It refers primarily to proclaiming or testifying about what God has done to the degree a man has had revelation or experiences to draw from. However, to have the courage to prophesy in the greater sense could be included in what Paul is saying.
3. "Wait" means to *go out and do it*, ala to "wait" on tables.
4. "Simplicity" means to do something in sincerity or out of true compassion.
5. "Dissimulation" means "hypocrisy."
6. "Business" should be translated as "zeal" or "diligence."
7. Another bad translation that should be rendered: "Steadfastly."
8. Better paraphrased as: "*Treat everyone equally, and don't regard the rich and influential better than you do the common man.*"
9. One of Paul's more difficult-to-understand verses. It might be paraphrased like so: "*Don't return evil for evil, but rise above that by living an honest and noble a lifestyle in the sight of men.*"

ROMANS CHAPTER 13

1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.¹
 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.
 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:
 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.
 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.
 6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.
 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.
 8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.
 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.²
 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
 11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.
 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

ROMANS CHAPTER 13

1 Let every person respect governmental authorities, for no government or earthly authority exists unless God has ordained it, and God puts all governments in power.
 2 So whoever resists a representative of the government resists the ordinance of God; and those who resist will receive condemnation.
 3 For authorities are not sources of fear for those doing good, but to those doing evil. You don't want to live in fear from government officials, do you? So do good, and be good citizens, and the authorities will praise you.
 4 For the local official is, in a sense, the minister of God for your own good. But if you do that which is evil, you should indeed fear, for the ruler doesn't wield the sword in vain—he is a servant of God, a person to take revenge upon someone who does evil.
 5 Thus, you should submit to the government, not only for the sake of avoiding its wrath, but also to keep a clear conscience.
 6 For this reason you should also pay your national taxes, for the ruling authorities constantly devote themselves to their jobs.
 7 So give everyone what is due them: State taxes to whom taxes are due; import fees to whomever collects them; respect to those who are entitled to respect; and honor to those entitled to honor.
 8 Be in debt to no man—except to love one another! For he who loves another has fulfilled the Torah.
 9 For these commandments: *Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not give false testimony, Do not covet*, along with any other commandments, are all summed up by: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**
 10 Love impels a man to do nothing wrong to his neighbor, and so love is the fulfilling of the Torah.
 11 Live like this, realizing what times we live in, and that we should rouse ourselves from apathy—for our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.
 12 The night is almost over, and the day is starting to

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.³

dawn. Let us therefore cast off the deeds of darkness, and put on the armor of light.

13 Let us walk uprightly, as men walking in plain sight during the day, rather than walking in partying, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity--thinking "anything goes"--or strife and jealousy.

14 But [fix your attention fully on the example of Jesus Christ], and make no plans to fulfill the lust of the flesh.

1. We now come to some of Paul's most inconvenient and puzzling writings in which he extols the government of Nero as the servant of God, directing Christians to be in full obedience to it. Yet in a few years from the writing of these words, Nero will be throwing Christians to the lions and using them as human torches.

So how do we view Paul's words in a balanced manner? First, we can recognize he is articulating the idea that God is in control of everything, so if a government is in authority somewhere, God has apparently willed it in Paul's view. Secondly, this very notion of cooperating with civil authority in hope of being left alone is how the Jews managed to survive during the centuries of the Diaspora. Yet this also spelled their doom in Nazi Germany as they obediently complied with orders given them by the Nazi authorities, receiving the gas chambers as a reward.

So, like a lot of people, I don't like these verses as written since they seem to suggest a passive acquiescence to whatever ruling authorities happen to be in power, be they righteous or unrighteous. But they're there, and we should at least accept that they call on us to be exemplary citizens.

2. It is interesting to note here that Paul summarizes the morality of the Torah by repeating several of the 10 Commandments (excluding the Sabbath, of course), affirming the view that only the moral precepts of the Torah are binding upon Christians.

3. Wise advice here, for Paul points out that Christians should not place themselves in a position where they can be drawn into sin.

ROMANS CHAPTER 14

1 Him that is weak in the faith¹ receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.²

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.³

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.⁴ He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.⁵

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his

ROMANS CHAPTER 14

1 A person who is [less-educated] in the faith than you are should be welcomed, but don't get into disputes over nonessential doctrines that might confuse him and hurt his faith.

2 For one man believes that he can eat anything; but another [with less understanding] thinks he can only eat vegetables.

3 Let he who eats everything not look down on he who restricts his diet; and let not someone who has a restrictive [--or kosher--] diet think himself better than the man who eats everything, for God has received that person.

4 Who are you to judge another person's slave anyway? It's in his master's eyes that he stands or falls--and he shall indeed stand, for God is able to help him stand.

5 One man esteems [the Sabbath and other Holy days] above other days, while another sees every day as the same. Let every man follow his own conscience.

6 He who honors the day, does so to honor God. He who eats, eats to the Lord, and gives God thanks, while he who does not eat certain foods avoids them because of the Lord, and gives God thanks as well.

7 For none of us should be living for himself or dying to himself [but we all should be living for God].

8 For if we live, we live for the Lord. And if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For this is why Christ died, rose, and revived: So that he could be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 So why then do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ [so worry about yourself].

11 Remember what's written: **As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.**

12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

13 Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore. Instead, live so as not to be a stumblingblock or a means of causing another brother to fall.

14 Personally, I have been given to understand by the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean to eat. But if someone still believes it is unclean, then to *that* person it *is* unclean.

brother's way.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.⁶

15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.⁷

21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.⁸

22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

23 And he that doubteth is damned⁹ if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

15 But if another brother takes issue with the meat you eat, be charitable and don't eat it [in his presence]. Don't cause him, for whom Christ died, to fall into sin over mere food.

16 Then your doing what is actually good to do will not be spoken evil of.

17 Remember, the Messianic Kingdom is not eating and drinking; it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he who serves Christ in righteousness, peace and joy is acceptable to God, and has a good reputation among men.

19 So let us do what produces peace, and which places us in a position to build each other up.

20 Don't destroy the work of God over mere meat. All things are perfectly fine to eat, but it is sinful for a man to eat if his conscience convicts him.

21 It is good not to eat meat, nor drink wine, nor to do anything else that causes your brother to stumble or be made weak.

22 Do you have the understanding in the faith to do certain things that someone else does not? Then have it to yourself before God. Happy is the man who does not condemn himself for doing what he knows is permitted to do.

23 But another man, in a state of doubt, can be condemned if he eats something he thinks is not permitted, because he has not eaten out of his knowledge in the faith. For whatsoever is not done in accordance with one's faith is sin.

1. "**Weak in the faith**" means one whose education in doctrinal issues is incomplete. Specifically, the Jews being spoken of here seem to be those from an Essene perspective, who rejected meat and practiced vegetarianism. Some, however, would speculate this passage refers to those rejecting meats that might have been offered to idols.

2. It's good that Paul here acknowledges not all Christians have a complete unity in all nonessential issues, and that they should not be condemned, but rather accepted and shown courtesy.

3. Presumably a reference to Sabbath-keeping.

4. The words "**and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it,**" are an addition to the text.

5. The verse could be paraphrased as: "*For none of us should be living by his own dictates or dying by his own dictates [but we all should be living for God].*"

6. Probably a reference to the fact that the Gentile Christians were freed from the requirement of observing kosher dietary laws. Paul here is telling them not to flaunt their freedom in the face of traditional Jews who still observed the *Kashrut* traditions.

7. Interestingly, Paul is expressing the idea that a person who does something, believing it is sin, commits sin even if the action is itself not sinful!

8. A point needs to be made here that Paul is not saying that Christians are bound to adopt a legalistic lifestyle in order not to offend someone who lives by their own legalistic set of extra-biblical commands. In other words, one need not stop smoking because a Pentecostal Holiness person would be offended at seeing that, nor must he adopt Sabbath-keeping just because a 7th-Day Adventist would be offended at seeing a fellow Christian worshipping on Sunday. Rather, Paul is saying that a person should not let their liberty cause someone else to stumble if they adopt the same practices out of peer pressure, believing them to be sinful. An example would be trying to entice an observant Messianic into eating some pork ribs.

9. As always, "**damned**" is too strong a word. It means, "**condemned**."

ROMANS CHAPTER 15

1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify

ROMANS CHAPTER 15

1-2 So then, we who are strong [--being knowledgeable and mature in the faith--] should be conscious and supportive of newer believers who aren't as developed in *their* knowledge and practice. So let us not just please ourselves, but rather let each of us concern ourselves with doing what's best for our neighbor so he may be built up too.

3 For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written: **The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.**

4 For all the things written in ages past in the Old Testament were written for us to learn from so that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, could have hope.

God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:¹

9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:²

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

24 Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.³

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have performed this, and have

5-6 Now may the God of patience and encouragement enable you all to achieve the same attitude [of love and servanthood] toward each other that Christ Jesus had, that you all—with one mind and mouth—can glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 So [you Jews and Gentiles] accept one another as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

8-9 Now I point out that Jesus Christ was a servant to the circumcised [—the covenant people, the Jews—] fulfilling and showing the truth of God's promises made to the Patriarchs, but also so that the Gentiles so could glorify Him for His mercy, for it is written: **For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.**

10 And again he said: **Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.**

11 And again: **Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.**

12 And Isaiah said: **There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.**

13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all His joy and peace in your faith so that you may be filled with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

14 Meanwhile, I am convinced, my brethren, that you are full of goodness, and in possession of everything you need to know, and can admonish one another.

15-16 Even so, brethren, I have been bold to write these things to remind you of what you already know, because of the grace given me by God that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. My job is to minister the Gospel of God so that my offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable to God through their sanctification on the part of the Holy Spirit.

17 So it is no shame for me to be proud of what Jesus Christ has done through me in my doing the work of God.

18-19 For I will not speak about anything that Christ has not done through me in making the Gentiles obedient to the Gospel in word and deed, displaying mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God. So, from Jerusalem to Illyricum [Crete and the Balkans], I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.

20 Yes indeed, I have made every effort to preach the Gospel in places where Christ's name is unknown, lest I should be building upon the work of some other man.

21 But instead, as it is written: **To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.**

22 Because of my constantly preaching in new areas, I have long had to delay coming to you.

23 But now, having finished my work of evangelism in the region here, and having wanted for many years to come to you,

24 When I depart for Spain, I will come by way of Rome, and I trust to see you on my journey and enjoy some time with you before you help supply me for the journey.

25 But right now, I must go to Jerusalem to deliver the relief fund to the righteous there.

26 For it has pleased the churches in northern and southern Greece to make a contribution for the righteous poor living in Jerusalem.

sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

27 It has truly pleased them to do this since they are certainly in debt to them. For if the Gentiles have been made sharers of the Jews' spiritual blessings, it is their duty to show their thanks by ministering some natural blessings to the Jews in return.

28 So when I have taken care of all this, I will come by you on my way to Spain.

29 And I am sure that when I do come to you, I will [come and minister with signs and wonders] in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

30-32 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the love in the Spirit, that you make fervent prayers to God that I will be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea. Also, pray that the relief fund I bring will be accepted by the righteous, so that I may come to you with joy, by the will of God, and be refreshed with you.

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

1. This verse could be paraphrased like so: "Now I point out that Jesus Christ was a minister to the Hebrews, fulfilling and showing the truth of God's promises made to the Patriarchs." Even so, Paul then goes on in the next verses to remind the Jews in his audience that God, from days of old, had foreordained that the Gentiles should be equally acceptable to Him along with the Hebrews.

2. It is interesting that Paul specifically tells the assembly in Rome he will not become involved with churches he did not specifically start. It is thus possible that the Roman church had no formal beginning before Paul or his representatives arrived there to bring the believers into a specific group.

3. A reference to the collection mentioned in 1 Cor. 6:1.

ROMANS CHAPTER 16

1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.¹

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.²

7 Salute Andronicus and Junia³, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys⁴ my beloved.

10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

16 Salute one another with an holy kiss.⁵ The churches of Christ salute you.

ROMANS CHAPTER 16

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe [who is delivering this letter]. She is a servant of the church at Cenchrea.

2 Receive her in the Lord as is proper for the righteous to do, and help her with whatever she needs, for she has been of great assistance to many others, including myself.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my associates in Christ Jesus.

4 Both have risked their necks for me, for which I not only thank them, but all the Gentile churches as well.

5 Likewise, convey my greetings to the church that meets in their house. Say hello to my very beloved Epaphroditus, who was my first convert to Christ in southern Greece.

6 Greet Mary, who worked tirelessly for us.

7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives, and my fellow prisoners, who are esteemed by the apostles, and who were believers before I was.

8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

9 Greet Urbane, our helper in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.

10 Greet Apelles, who is approved of by Christ. Salute those who are of the household of Aristobulus.

11 Salute Herodian, my kinsman. Greet all who are of the household of Narcissus, who are believers in the Lord.

12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who work for the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, who labored much for the Lord.

13 Greet Rufus, who is chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who is like a mother to me as well.

14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brothers who are with them.

15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister,

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.
 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.
 19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.
 20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.
 21 Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius⁶, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.
 22 I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.
 23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city⁷ saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.
 24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
 25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,
 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:
 27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

and greet Olympas, and all the saints that are with them.
 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.
 17 One more thing: I beseech you, brethren, take note of those who cause divisions and offenses that are contrary to the doctrine [of unity in Christ, independent of one's background] you were taught, and avoid them.
 18 For people like this do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ—they serve their own bellies, and by their cunning words and crafty speeches deceive the simple-minded.
 19 Your obedience, by the way, has been brought to the attention of everyone, and I am glad of this for you. You see, I want you to be wise about all that is good, and ignorant about all that is evil.
 20 The God of peace, meanwhile, will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.
 21 Timothy, my fellow worker, along with Luke, Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, send greetings.
 22 I Tertius, who penned this epistle, greet you in the Lord.
 23 My current host, Gaius, and the whole church send greetings to you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, greets you as does Quartus, a brother.
 24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
 25-27 Now to the only wise God, who can keep you grounded through my Gospel and the preaching regarding Jesus Christ—according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret from the beginning of the world, but now manifested through the Scriptures of the prophets by decree of the everlasting God who made it known to all nations to lead them to the obedience to and from faith—be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

1. Phoebe, as mentioned in the introduction, was the person who had delivered this epistle, and almost certainly was the one who read it to the church.
 2. This was not the Virgin Mary.
 3. This female cousin Junia (or Julia in some texts) may have held the rank of an apostle according to Paul's words here. That, or she had a great reputation amongst the various apostles.
 4. This man supposedly became the Bishop of Byzantium.
 5. As noted earlier, this was a mouth-kiss that the early church quickly limited to those of the same gender.
 6. This is probably a reference to Luke.
 7. In 1896, a piece of limestone was unearthed in Corinth stating that this same Erastus was responsible for paving the plaza in which it was found.

COLOSSIANS

Paul wrote the epistle to the Colossians between 61-63 AD, during his first imprisonment in Rome. Colossae was a city near Laodicea inside of what is today Turkey, and the leader of the church there seems to have been Epaphras, who may have visited Paul in Rome to seek counsel on the schisms and Gnostic-like heresies within the church back home. Some of these heresies traced themselves to an occult movement inside the church that believed angels and other spiritual forces were exerting an influence over world events. To placate these forces and avert persecution, some in the church were ‘**worshipping**’ angels, and Paul brings out the fact that all spiritual forces were created by, and are subservient to, Christ.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,
2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,
4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,
5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;
6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:
7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;
8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.
9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge¹ of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;
11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;
12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:
14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:
15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn² of every creature:
16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:³
17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 1

1 **P**aul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
2 To the righteous and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace and peace be to you from God our Father [and the Lord Jesus Christ].
3-5 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always keeping you in our prayers since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love you have for all the righteous, a love born of your confidence in what is laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard before in the Message of the Gospel truth.
6-7 This Message has come to you, just as it has the rest of the world; and as it has born fruit elsewhere, it has likewise been bearing fruit in you from the day you heard it and came to know grace of God in all truth, as told you by Epaphras, our dear fellow laborer, who is a faithful minister of Christ to you.
8 He is the one who informed us of your love in the Spirit.
9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard of it, have desired and unceasingly prayed that you would be filled with perfect knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,
10 So that you can walk worthy of the Lord and be pleasing to him, being fruitful in every good work, and growing in the knowledge of God,
11-12 Receiving the power to be strengthened in patience and long-suffering through His might and glorious power, joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has made you worthy to inherit the Light with the righteous ones.
13 The same Father has delivered us from the Power who rules over darkness, and integrated us into the kingdom of His dear Son,
14 Through whose blood we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.
15 He is the visible reflection of the invisible God, and is pre-eminent over all Creation.
16 For by the Son, all things in heaven and earth--visible and invisible--were created, whether they are earthly thrones or rulers, spirits in charge of whole nations, or spirit beings in the heavens above--all things were created by him for his own pleasure.
17 And the Son existed before all things; and through the Son, all things [continue their existence].
18 And he is the head of the body--the church--and is the

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.
 19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;
 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.
 21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled,
 22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:
 23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;
 24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:⁴
 25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:
 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:
 28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:
 29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

genesis and firstborn from the dead so that he may have pre-eminence [over everything in the universe].

19 For it pleased the Father that every possible fullness [and authority] should dwell in him;

20 And, having made peace [between God and man] through the blood of his cross, the Father ordained that all things, whether on earth or in the cosmos, should be reconciled through and to him.

21-23 And you [Gentiles] also, who were once alienated from God in your minds by your wicked deeds, He has reconciled in the body of Christ through his death, to present you holy, guiltless, and beyond reproach in His sight--provided you continue in the faith and remain unmoved from the hope of the Gospel you've heard that was also preached to every creature under heaven; the same Gospel that I, Paul, have been made a minister of.

24 It is because of you that I can rejoice in my sufferings as I employ *my own* body to inherit the work and afflictions Christ began on the cross for the sake of *his* body, the church,

25 To which I have been made a minister, according to the assignment that has been given me for you, to fulfill the decree of God,

26 Which was a mystery that was hidden for ages, through many generations, but now is being manifested to his righteous ones,

27 To whom God would reveal what is the riches and glory of this mystery among the Gentiles--which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

28 Whom we preach about, warning and teaching every man with all the wisdom we have so that we may present every man mature in Christ Jesus.

29 So I also labor, working diligently in His power that operates mightily through me.

1. The word here translated "**knowledge**" is a very strong word suggesting the *ultimate* sort of truth that transcends normal human knowledge.

2. This verse is sometimes twisted by groups who claim Jesus was a created being. "**Firstborn**," in this verse, actually means that Christ has pre-eminence over everything that exists because He created it all! (See verse 18.)

3. Paul here has listed a number of temporal and angelic hierarchies, showing that Christ not only is in a position of authority over these supernatural and temporal powers; He actually created them! The reason for this point may be seen in the next chapter, where Paul reveals some false teachers had been trying to get the Colossians to worship angels. This heresy isn't too far removed from the teachings of denominations claiming that Jesus is Himself the archangel Michael.

4. This is a rather enigmatic verse Catholicism views as suggesting that it is possible for humans to take the wrath of God upon themselves, lest He smite others for their sins. An apparition at Fatima said something like that to the three children it appeared to, calling on them to avert God's wrath by drinking from a chalice in order to make reparation for the crimes of humanity. Evangelical Christianity would understand Paul to be saying that he was there to do his part to further the Gospel, enduring the persecution that Christ foretold the apostle he would face for the sake of the Gospel.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 2

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;
 2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;
 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
 4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.¹

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 2

1-3 For I would have you be aware of the great conflict that I have undergone for you, and those in Laodicea, and for others as well who have not yet met me personally, so that everyone's hearts may be comforted, being united in love to the point they are enriched with full assurance of understanding of this mystery of God the Father and Christ, in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 And what I am about to say [in verse 6], I say so that no man tricks you through crafty arguments.

5 For though I am not present in body, I am with you in spirit, rejoicing over how, like good soldiers, you have

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.
 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.²
 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:
 11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
 12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
 13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;
 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
 16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:³
 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.
 18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,
 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.
 20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,
 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;
 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?
 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.⁴

formed a solid unit, locked your shields together and stand unmoving and united in your faith in Christ.
 6 So I say that you should now advance in lockstep according to the knowledge you received about Christ Jesus the Lord,
 7 Being rooted and built up in him, and grounded in the faith you were taught, abounding in it with gratitude.
 8 But beware, lest any man rob you through philosophy and empty deceit, substituting human tradition born from the world's demon-inspired principles, in favor of the truth of Christ.
 9-12 For in Christ alone, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form, and you are complete in Christ, the head of all rulers and powers, through whom you are circumcised not with the circumcision performed with human hands on a physical body, but by the [spiritual] circumcision of Christ, which cuts the sins of the flesh from the body [through your being] buried with him in baptism and your being raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised *him* from the dead.
 13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has made alive with Christ, having forgiven all your trespasses,
 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances [in the Torah] that were against us, taking them away by nailing them to his cross [and assuming our debt].
 15 Then, having looted demonic principalities and powers through the cross as well, he made them a public spectacle of defeat in a triumphal parade.
 16 So don't be moved by someone's criticism over what you eat or drink, or whether you observe a [Jewish] Feast day [Sabbath], or a New Moon [Sabbath], or whether you keep the various other Jewish Sabbaths.
 17 These are symbolic of things to come, but their personification is in Christ.
 18-19 Nor should you let any man rob you of your reward by intimidating you into some obligation to placate angels, intruding into [metaphysical] things he knows nothing about, based on some esoteric revelation or vision he has received from his own intellectual pride and arrogance rather than from the Head--by which the rest of the body is given all it needs to grow, being joined together and growing in the increase of God.
 20 So if you have died with Christ and become dead to demon-birthed philosophies and thinking of the world, why--as if you were still living in the ungodly world--are you obeying worldly religious regulations?
 21-22 I mean regulations along the lines of, "Don't touch; don't taste; don't handle" things that are gone as soon as they are [eaten]. It's carnal men who have invented such prohibitions.
 23 They have a semblance of wisdom in the sense of conveying self-imposed religious acts, false humility, and self-denial--but they are of no use in bringing about true self-control.

1. This verse can be understood either as the paraphrase renders it, or like so: "And what I just said [in the last three verses], I said so that no man tricks you through crafty arguments."

2. After reminding them that they originally embraced the message of the Gospel of Faith, Paul now begins to address the heresies present in the church, warning that the Colossians could be '**spoiled**'--that is, robbed of their freedom and inheritance in Christ through the addition to faith of either philosophy, or else the keeping of extraneous religious laws. The heresies apparently traced themselves to a lack of understanding of the nature and Deity of Christ, with some teaching He was a created being. Next, came the typical attempts by the Judaizers to require the Gentiles to keep Sabbath and Feast days (verse 16), tying observance of the Torah to being accepted by God, either above or on par with faith.

3. Once again, clear indication that Paul is warning the Gentile converts not to be intimidated into embracing Judaism as the

completion of their walk with Christ. Also, as he does in Galatians 4, he absolves the Gentiles from keeping the various forms of the Jewish Sabbath. (The Sabbath year is not mentioned because it was not really an issue as it was in Galatia when Galatians was written.)

4. How appropriate are the words from 2000 years ago to our own times, for the church to this day all too often creates its own extra-biblical laws about what God requires of Christians—such as not smoking, not dancing, not gambling, fasting during Lent, etc., which the Bible itself never mentions.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 3

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.
 5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry¹.
 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience².
 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.
 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication³ out of your mouth.
 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;
 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge⁴ after the image of him that created him:
 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian⁵, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.
 12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.
 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.
 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs⁶, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.
 18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.⁷
 19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.
 20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.
 21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.
 22 Servants⁸, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 3

1 So if you have arisen with Christ, seek for the things that are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.
 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.
 3 For you are dead [to this world], and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
 4 And when Christ—who is our life—appears, you shall also appear with him in glory.
 5 So put to death everything in your bodily members that is earthy: Fornication, impurity, wild passion, evil desires, and greed—which is a form of idolatry.
 6 It's these very things that causes the wrath of God to fall [upon those who refuse to believe the Gospel].
 7 You once walked in some of these things when you were still alive to the world.
 8 Now banish these things from your mouth as well: Anger, wrath, malice, irreverent speech, and profanity.
 9-11 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off the old [earthy] man along with his deeds, and have put on the new man who thinks in an entirely new manner after the pattern of his creator, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian (be he European all the way down to a Scythian), slave or free—but Christ is all, and in all!
 9-11 [Alternate reading]: Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off the old [earthy] man along with his deeds, and have put on the new man who thinks in an entirely new manner after the pattern of his creator, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, black or white, be one from the same hemisphere or the furthest part of the earth, whether slave or free—but Christ is all, and in all!
 12 Holy and beloved brethren: As the elect of God, don heartfelt attitudes of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness and patience,
 13 Putting up with each other's faults, and forgiving any that you have quarrels with even as Christ forgave you as an example of the way you should forgive others.
 14 And atop all this, clothe yourself with [God's sort of unselfish] love, which binds all these things together in perfection.
 15 And let the peace of God rule your hearts, something that the body of Christ is called upon to do. Also, be thankful.
 16 Let the Message of Christ live bountifully in you through all the wisdom God has granted. Teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and singing in Tongues, singing in your hearts to the Lord with gratitude.
 17 And whatever you do in speech or deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
 18 Wives, give place to your husbands as is proper in the Lord.
 19 Husbands, love your wives, and don't treat them

menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:
 23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;
 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.
 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.⁹

harshly.
 20 Teenagers, obey your parents in all things, for God is very pleased by this.
 21 Fathers, don't provoke your children to anger, lest you break their spirit.
 22 Slaves, obey in every way your earthly masters. Don't do so just when you're being watched--in the way that men-pleasers do--but in heartfelt sincerity, honoring God.
 23 And whatever you do, do it well, as if you are doing it for the Lord, rather than for men,
 24 Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ.
 25 But he who does wrong shall be punished for the wrong he has done, as there is no partiality with God.

1. It's interesting to note that Paul redefines idolatry to mean something other than its classic sense. Here, for instance, he equates covetousness with it. Most theologians would go a step further and view idolatry ultimately as self-worship.
2. Although reasonably translated as "**disobedience**," the word also refers to the most hardened form of unbelief, and is translated as "**unbelief**" in Hebrews 4:6. It could therefore be helpful to paraphrase the latter half of the verse as: "*Children of those who refuse to believe [the Gospel].*" That aside, it should be noted that the latter half of the verse is probably a later addition to the text.
3. "**Filthy communication**" should be translated as: "**Cussing**."
4. "**Renewed in knowledge**" could be understood as "thinking in new ways," or "embracing God's attitudes."
5. The use of "**Barbarian, Scythian**" is not fully clear. Scythians, who at times were a great nomadic empire ranging from Iran to Ukraine, were regarded as the most barbaric of people, extreme in their brutality. By Paul's time they were greatly whittled down to insignificance as a major force, and viewed with disdain. To list them together with Barbarians is almost like saying "Barbarian, Norseman...Barbarian, Celt," etc. Both are colloquially Barbarians. "**Barbarian**," as a term, did encompass tribal, uncivilized peoples known to the Roman Empire from Europe to Africa and could actually be referring to African tribesman, endorsing an inclusion of races, dark-skinned and light. The author is not the first to suggest this, and it is certainly within the realm of possibility that is the allusion in the passage, which certainly fits with the theme.
6. "**Spiritual songs**" is a reference to singing in Tongues. It is not a reference to singing hymns or religious songs since Paul in Eph. 5:19 makes a distinction between these.
7. Women don't like this verse, but Paul's command is that the wife acknowledges her husband is the head of the house. Peter (1st Peter 3:6) even goes a step further, showing how Sarah called Abraham her "**lord**" or "**master**." To balance this out, however, Paul then goes on to clarify that everyone should submit to one another, and that the headship should be exercised for the unselfish good of the person or group beneath the leader, and never as a means of being catered to for one's own convenience.
8. Where you see the word "**servants**" in this and the following chapter, the word should actually be translated: "**Slaves**."
9. This verse has a lot of meat in it. In one sense, it is a warning to the lost that God will punish them for their sins. But it also warns the Christian that God will judge him for his sins as well. The difference is that one group receives the punishment as wrath, while the other receives it as correction.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.
 2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
 3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:
 4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
 5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.¹
 6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.
 7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:
 8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate², and comfort your hearts;
 9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.
 10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus³, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Masters, give to your slaves that which is right and fair [--proper food, clothing, and treatment--] knowing that you too are a slave with a Master in heaven.
 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert and in an attitude of thanksgiving.
 3-4 And pray that God would open a door of utterance for us to proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains even now, that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.
 5 Treat unbelievers outside the Community wisely, and make the most of the time you have with them.
 6 Let your speech always display grace, seasoned with the salt [of wisdom, tact, and edification], that you may know how to answer every man.
 7 Tychicus will give you a report on how I am doing. He is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow slave in the Lord.
 8 I have sent him on to you for the same reason: To see how you are getting along, and to comfort your hearts.
 9 I have also sent Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother who is one of your fellow Colossians. They will bring you up to date on all the news from this part of the world.
 10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends greetings as does Mark--Barnabas' sister's son--about whom you

received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his⁴ house.

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

were already given instructions about. Receive him if he comes to you.

11 And Jesus, who is called Justus, greets you as well. These men are the only Jews working with me to advance the Kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

12 Epaphras, another of your fellow Colossians and slave of Christ, sends greetings. He is ever praying intensely that you will stand mature and complete in God's will.

13 I can attest to the fact that he has a great zeal for you, those in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas send greetings.

15 Convey my best to the brethren in Laodicea including Nymphas and the church that meets in her house.

16 When this letter is read to you, make sure it is also read in the church at Laodicea; and likewise, you should read the letter I sent to them.

17 Say to Archippus: "Be sure that you heed the ministry to which God has called you, that you may fulfill it."

18 THE SALUTATION BY MY OWN HAND, PAUL. REMEMBER MY CHAINS. GRACE BE WITH YOU. AMEN.

1. This is a rather flowery way of saying: "Treat unbelievers wisely, and make the most of the time you have with them."

2. "**Your estate**" is better understood as: "**How you're doing**."

3. "**Marcus**" is Mark, the writer of the Gospel, a nephew of Barnabas.

4. Should be translated: "**Her**" house.

MARCUS SESTIUS PHILEMON

This epistle is the shortest writing of Paul's, occasioned by the circumstance of a runaway slave whom Paul was returning to his master, a fact that was used in time past to justify slavery in the US.

Given the fact that slave dealers were denied salvation (1 Timothy 1:10), there is no question that Paul did not approve of chattel slavery* personally, but since it was a staple of every major civilization on earth, to speak out against it would have put the apostle in opposition to the laws of the time, and brought the wrath of Rome upon the faith, the memory of Spartacus 140 years earlier still fresh in the minds of many Romans. (You'll note that Paul dared not even flat-out ask Philemon to free the man, though his desire in verse 21 is abundantly clear. This is how sensitive the issue of speaking against slavery in the Roman Empire was--the apostle needed to speak in veiled language, lest his words, falling into Roman hands, be used against he and the church!)

There is virtually nothing of theological significance in the letter other than Paul's pointing out we are all, whether slave or free, equal in Christ.

Philemon himself was supposedly bishop of Colossae, probably overseeing Laodicea and Hierapolis as well (which reveals that slave-ownership did not disqualify one from ministerial authority in that era), and Appia is believed to have been his wife, with Archippus their son. This epistle was written around 61-63 AD, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, and fits with the epistle to the Colossians because the slave in question--Onesimus--was among the group sent back by Paul with that epistle.

According to tradition, Onesimus was martyred with Philemon and his family during Nero's reign, but he may actually have become bishop of Ephesus.

* Slavery, in Jewish culture, was a sort of indentured servitude. We're not told what sort of "slave" Onesimus was. We know only that he seems to have stolen some money (verse 18), and ran away to find Paul, who eventually sent him back with this letter requesting Philemon free him.

MARCUS SESTIUS PHILEMON CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon¹ our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,
2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:
3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,
5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;
6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.
7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.
8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,
9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.
10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

MARCUS SESTIUS PHILEMON CHAPTER 1

1  Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, to Marcus Sestius Philemon, our dearly beloved fellow laborer;
2 And our beloved Apphia and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets in your house:
3 Grace and peace to you, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
4 I thank my God, always making mention of all of you in my prayers,
5 Having heard of your love and faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the righteous;
6 So that the sharing of your faith will be sparked into action when you understand all the good things we can do in Christ Jesus.
7 For we have great joy and comfort in your love because the souls of the righteous are refreshed by you, brother.
8 Therefore, though I could ask a request upon you because of my rank in Christ,
9 Yet for the sake of our love for each other, I instead beg you as nothing more than Paul, the old man, who is now in prison for Jesus Christ.
10 I am asking you for the sake of my son Onesimus, whose father I became in prison.

11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:
 12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:
 13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:
 14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.
 15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;
 16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?
 17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.
 18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;
 19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.²
 20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.
 21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.
 22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.
 23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;
 24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas,³ my fellowlabourers.
 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

11 In time past with you, he did not live up to his name [—which means “profitable”]. But now, he is that both to you and to me.
 12 I have sent him back to you [with this letter]. Receive him, and you will be receiving my own heart.
 13 I would love to have kept him here, that in your place he could assist me while I am in chains for the Gospel.
 14 But without your permission, I would not do so; and I didn’t want to constrain you to do this, but I hoped it would be with your consent.
 15 For perhaps Onesimus left you for a while, that you could have him back forever,
 16 Not as a slave, but more than a slave—a brother who is beloved, especially to me. And how much more should he be beloved to you, both in a natural sense, and in the Lord?
 17 If you consider me your partner in the Gospel, receive him as you would me.
 18 If he has wronged you or owes you anything, charge it to my account.
 19 I, Paul, writing with my own hand, agree to repay whatever he owes you—though I won’t remind you of how you even owe your very soul to *me*!
 20 Yes, brother, give me cause to rejoice in the Lord—refresh my heart in the Lord.
 21 Having confidence in what I knew you would do, I wrote this to you, knowing you’ll go beyond what I have asked [and will give him his freedom altogether].
 22 Keep a bed made up for me, for I believe, through your prayers, I shall gain my freedom and come visit you.
 23 Those who send greetings apart from me include Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus,
 24 Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow laborers.
 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

1. An inscription on a tomb in nearby Laodicea from a freed slave in tribute to his former master very possibly identifies Philemon as having the full name of Marcus Sestius Philemon. While this cannot be known with absolute certainty, the coincidence is striking enough that it is no great leap to presume that man was *the* Philemon.

2. This statement is so completely Jewish in flavor, one might wonder if Paul was from Brooklyn, for we could hear precisely the same thing from the mouth of a present-day Jew: “I won’t remind you of how much I’ve done for *you*!”

3. This is referring to Luke, the Gospel writer.

EPHESIANS

The epistle to Ephesus was written by Paul in the same timeframe as Colossians, sometime between 61-63 AD during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. Interestingly, sections of both epistles are almost identical, suggesting that Paul outlined only one epistle and then tailored it to each specific area. Ephesians is noteworthy as one of Paul's "least friendly" letters, focusing on teaching, and excluding his typical greetings and salutations.

Ephesus, with its population of over 400,000, was the chief Roman seat of power of the region of Asia Minor (Turkey). Apollos may have headed the church there for a period of time. Eventually, Timothy came to head it, and after him John, who lived out his last days there.

The Ephesians seemed to have a similar problem as the Colossians in that they perceived angels as requiring placation, lest they send trouble upon the earth, and Paul (or perhaps a disciple of his writing under direction) once again teaches that Christ has been raised far above the supernatural powers believed to exist, and that *He* is the one in control.

Finally, it is by tradition that we believe this was meant for the Ephesians since the earliest manuscripts do not list its target audience. There is some speculation that Ephesians may actually be the "lost letter to the Laodiceans" mentioned in Col. 4.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual¹ blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame² before him in love:
5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted⁴ in the beloved.
7 In whom we have redemption⁵ through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;
8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;
9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:
10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.⁶
11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:
12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.
13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit⁷ of promise,

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1

1  Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the righteous and faithful in Christ Jesus [at Ephesus].
2 Grace and peace be to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the heavenly blessings of the Spirit through Christ.
4 For in His love, He chose us to be in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unblemished before Him.
5-9 By His will, and for His own pleasure, God predestined us to be adopted children through Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of His grace, through which he has made us incalculably favored in the beloved Son, through whose blood we have redemption and the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of God's grace that He dispensed toward us in all wisdom and understanding, having revealed the mystery of His will that came about through the merciful decision that He made.
10 And that mystery was, that when the right time came, He would reconcile, and place under authority, all things in the heavens and on the earth through and to Christ.
11-12 And, in Christ, we also have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to God's own plans—which He brings to pass as He wills—that we, who first trusted in Christ, should be to the praise of His glory.
13-14 You trusted in him too, after you heard the message of truth about the "Good news" of salvation in Christ, who sealed you with the promised Holy Spirit after you believed, who is the down payment of our inheritance until we receive the full possession

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.
 15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,
 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;
 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:
 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set⁸ him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,
 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:
 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,⁹
 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

of what has been promised, to the praise of God's glory.
 15-16 For this reason also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and the love you have for all of the righteous, have not ceased to mention and give thanks for you in my prayers,
 17 Asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, to give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of [Christ],
 18 So that the eyes of your understanding will be opened to comprehend the hope of His calling, and the incalculable riches of glory the righteous will inherit,
 19 And to comprehend the incredible might of His awesome power toward us who believe.
 20-21 It's the same power that God used in Christ when He raised him from the dead and sat him down on a throne at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every title of authority that exists--not only in this age, but also in the [Messianic] Age that is to come.
 22 And God put all things under his feet, and exalted him, who is head of all things, to be the head all things for the church,
 23 Which is his body and the full visible expression of him who fills everything in the universe [with his presence].

1. "Spiritual" here refers to something that comes from the Holy Spirit.
2. "Without blame" should be translated as "unblemished" in the sense of being a thing devoted or sacrificed to God that is considered as meeting the standards necessary to be acceptable.
3. As pointed out by David Stern, verses 3 to 14 are one long sentence in the Greek, and resemble a Jewish benediction.
4. "Accepted" comes from a single powerful word that is translated as "full of grace" or "highly favored" when the angel greets Mary in Luke's Gospel.
5. The word here refers to ransoming a condemned criminal or securing manumission for a slave.
6. Paul here begins to outline that all of creation has been reconciled and placed under the ultimate headship of Christ.
7. It's interesting that Paul brings up the Holy Spirit in this manner. While nothing like Tongues is specifically referred to, one can speculate that in the back of Paul's mind he is bringing to the listeners' minds some sort of visible, experiential manifestation of the Holy Spirit that they would recognize apart from a nebulous indwelling that is accepted by faith but which is not outwardly visible.
8. "Set" is a bad translation. The word denotes to *sit down*. In the culture, it denotes kingly authority and exaltation over everyone else who must stand in the king's presence.
9. Again dealing with the concerns of the people that spiritual entities must be feared and pacified, Paul not only shows that Christ is in authority over these elemental spirits, but that the church on earth also has authority over them, and need not live in fear or intimidation of facing the wrath of these beings.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;¹
 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience²:
 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation³ in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved⁴);
 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:⁵
 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2

1 And you, who were once dead in trespasses and sins, he has made alive.
 2 For in time past, you walked according to the ways of the unsaved world, in the patterns established by the Prince of the Power of the Air, the spirit force working through his rebellious, unbelieving sons [in opposition to we believers who operate under the Holy Spirit].
 3 We all, at one time, were like them in our various lifestyles, giving in to the wrong desires of our flesh and unregenerate minds. In fact, we [Jews] were naturally in the position of being children of wrath, just as others today are.
 4-7 But God--who is rich in mercy--because of the great love He had for us even when we were hopelessly dead in sin, brought us to life as He did Christ, saving us by grace, resurrecting us, and enthroning us with him in heavenly places so that in ages to come He might point to us as the example of the unlimited riches of the grace He had for us in Christ Jesus.

us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.⁶

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship⁷ created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition⁸ between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace,⁹

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,¹⁰ but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

8 For it is *by* that grace that you are saved, through your faith--and even that faith doesn't really come from yourself; it too is the gift of God.

9 Yes, salvation is not based on anything one can do, in order that no man can boast.

10 For we are the poem God is writing in Christ Jesus, leaving behind an epic of good works that He ordained for us to walk in from the beginning.

11 Recall then, that once you were Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by those called the "Circumcision" based on a physical operation done by human hands.

12 At that time you were outside of Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and thus strangers excluded from the covenants of promise--with no hope, and walking through life without God.

13 But now in Christ Jesus, you who were sometimes *very* far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ!

14 For he is our peace [offering], who has made both Jew and Gentile to be one, and who by this has broken down the "middle wall of partition" separating the Gentiles and the Jews,

15 Having abolished in his body that which [ultimately] divided us: the Torah, along with its commandments contained in decrees [of separation], so that he could take two people and make them into one people, thus making "*shalom*" [peace].

16 Reconciling both to God in one body through the cross, killing off the enmity [between Jew and Gentile and man and Him] through it.

17 And Christ came and **preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.**

18 For through Christ, both Jew and Gentile have access by one Holy Spirit to the Father.

19 And so now you Gentiles are no longer *strangers and foreigners*, but fellow citizens with the righteous [Jews], and are now part of the household of God [with them].

20-22 You likewise are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets--with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone--through whom the entire building is being fitted together and being built up as a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you are also being built up together as a habitation of God through the Holy Spirit.

1. Interestingly, there is quite a lot of text that is added by the translators to verses in this chapter in order to clarify meaning. The words "**hath he quickened**" are added, for instance.

2. Although reasonably translated as "**disobedience**," the word actually refers to the hardest form of unbelief--that of a stubborn refusal to believe what God has said. The last three words of the verse are thus equally translatable as: "**Children of those who refuse to believe.**"

3. "**Conversation**" refers to lifestyle, not verbal communication.

4. The Greek here is an absolute declaration that the Ephesians are in a saved state, not that they are on their way toward an eventual state of salvation.

5. Paul here tries to show the authority of the believer in opposition to the people's fear of various angelic forces. As he noted earlier, Christ sits at the right hand of God, showing His pre-eminence over angelic powers. Now the apostle elevates the members of the church to a similar lofty position. And, as we consider the verses we've been reading in context, Paul is pointing out that the only people who need fear the power of the devil are the unbelievers who are the devil's own children, while the believers have imputed authority over all within that realm.

6. One of the most important verses in the entire Bible showing every aspect of our salvation comes from God, including the faith that saves us (in the sense that it is through the grace of the Spirit that we even become able to believe in the first place). Other theologians, however, would understand this to instead be saying that God does not save us because of anything we have done. They might paraphrase the verse like this: "*For it is because of God's grace alone that you are saved--through faith--and not because of your deserving it, for your salvation is the gift of God.*"

The issue arises because the normal rules of Greek would tend to dilute the notion of *faith* being the gift. But in the author's view, this is an example of how putting the Greek under a microscope can cause the message to be misunderstood. Usually--but not always--a pronoun is identical to the gender of the noun before it. In the passage, "**that**" is neuter, and "**faith**" is feminine. Some theologians thus take the view that "**that**" does not refer to the "**faith**," but must relate to the preceding clause, which centers on the

word “**saved**,” and so the *salvation*--not the *faith*--is the “**gift of God**.” Others would point out that it is not engraved in stone that the pronoun and noun must always be identical in gender, and so “**that**” theoretically *can* go with “**faith**,” a view held by some classic theologians such as Chrysostom and Augustine. Still others would say that if “**that**” refers to the preceding clause, then it refers to the *entire* clause, and so indicates that both salvation *and* faith are the “**gift of God**.”

Limiting the point to salvation’s being the “**gift**” makes the sentence clumsily redundant: For by grace are you *saved* by faith, and this *being saved* is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

Grace obviously means it cannot be of oneself to start with so there is no good need to repeat the same thing twice. Only by relating the pronoun to both salvation *and* faith--or *only* to the faith--does the sentence make good, clear sense.

7. “**Workmanship**,” which can be understood as an object that is a masterpiece, may also be translated: “**Poem**.”

8. This probably refers to the wall of the Temple that separated Jew from Gentile, resulting in the death of the Gentile if he passed through. In a greater sense, it also refers to the veil of the Most Holy Place that also forbade entry to all but the High Priest.

9. This is not saying that Mosaic Law is relegated to the trash heap. Paul is illustrating that the Torah was, itself, a partition between man and God since man could never fully keep it. (Just as its commandments set up a division between Jew and Gentile, which was why it was righteous for the men in the time of Nehemiah to divorce their Gentile wives and send them away, while that would be sin in the New Covenant.) Now, with the Messiah having imputed to mankind a righteousness man could not appropriate through his own efforts, the punishments mandated in the Law are done away with, and the man who believes is fully acceptable to God through his faith, since God now views him through the righteousness of Christ. Likewise, Jew and Gentile are now one people in Christ through faith.

10. It’s important to note that even though the Torah had provision for Gentiles to dwell within the theocracy of Israel and even to keep the same Law--reaping some of the same benefits--the non-Hebrews were never looked upon as equal in rank to the physical descendants of Abraham until Messiah opened the way to God for both Jew and Gentile equally.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 3

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,¹
 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:
 3 How that by revelation² he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs³, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.
 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints⁴, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:
 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by⁵ the church the manifold wisdom of God,
 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:
 12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.
 13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.
 14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,⁶
 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;
 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 3

1 [Because of preaching this Gospel of inclusion, and the revelation that both Jew and Gentile have equal acceptability to, and equal access by, one Spirit to the Father,] this is why I, Paul, am a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.
 2 You have heard of the dispensation of grace God gave me for you.
 3 As you know from my earlier, but brief, epistle--it was by supernatural revelation that He revealed the mystery I just mentioned.
 4 When you read it, you may get an equal grasp of the knowledge I have regarding this mystery in Christ,
 5 That in earlier times was not known by humanity unlike now, since it has been revealed to Christ’s holy apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit,
 6 That mystery being that the Gentiles would be equal heirs [with the Jews], parts of the same body, and equal partakers of God’s promise in Christ through the Gospel.
 7 It was for this Gospel that I was made a servant through the gift of grace God gave to me by the effectual working of His mighty power.
 8 Yes, to me--who am lower than the least of all the righteous--has the grace been given to have the privilege of preaching to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
 9 And to make all men see their opportunity and part in this mystery that, from the beginning of the world, has been hidden with God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.
 10 He did this so that the demonic overlords and their minions in the heavens might now see the manifold wisdom of God through the church,
 11 Which was precisely His eternal plan he implemented in Christ Jesus our Lord,
 12 In whom we boldly and confidently draw near [to God], by faith in him.
 13 This is why I don’t want you to be intimidated at the tribulations for you that I undergo for your glory.
 14-19 For this reason I bend my knees before the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ]--the ultimate progenitor of all fathers and fatherhood in heaven and on earth [who

ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.⁷

appointed all beings to their places of authority and habitation]—asking Him to grant you, through the riches of His glory, to be mightily strengthened by His Spirit in your inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; so you, being rooted and grounded in His love, may be able to understand and know, with all the righteous, the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ, which is beyond human understanding; and that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to God, who is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to His power that works in us,

21 To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, forever and ever. Amen.

1. This verse is obviously badly written, and it appears that something is missing. The Aramaic text renders it better: **“For this cause, I, Paul, am a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.”**

2. It’s important to note that, in opposition to the way some teachers mock others for claiming to receive “revelations” on Scripture that aren’t shared by non-Charismatic Protestant Reformers or 19th century theologians, Paul’s theology did not necessarily come only from study, but through divine revelation. Indeed, the apostle confirms that some doctrines were **“hid”** (Col. 1:26, and verse 5 here) from clear perception.

3. More confirmation that, in opposition to what some wish to think, Gentiles were never looked upon as being “equal” to Abraham’s physical seed so long as the Messiah had not yet come.

4. A noteworthy statement that shows Paul’s growing humility. See Gal. 2:6 for Paul’s early assessment of himself, and 1 Tim. 1:15 for his final conclusion.

5. **“Through”** is a better translation than **“by.”** Paul is stating that God is revealing to the demonic spiritual forces His power, authority, and purpose through His church on earth.

6. There is a lot of depth to this humble verse. Paul first is saying that God is the ultimate creator of the entire concept of fatherhood, and ultimately is the father of all fathers. However, in stating that all families are **“named”** by God, he seems to also acknowledge that God has placed each rank of beings in their allotted place, sphere of influence, and position of authority. (Romans 8:38, Col. 1:16, Jude 1:6.) *Name*, it should be noted, can denote a rank, a prophetic calling, or position of authority in addition to simply being what someone is called. (Gen 11:4, 17:5,32:28; Matt. 1:21; Phil. 2:9.) In connection with this, it’s possible that when Jesus is interacting with the Gadarene demoniac in the Gospels and asks the demon’s name, He isn’t wishing to know if it’s Joe or Bill He’s talking to; He may be wanting to know what sort of rank this demon(s) held to understand why the demon didn’t immediately leave the first time Jesus commanded it to, but instead held on long enough to hold a brief conversation.

7. It almost seems as if this is the end of a letter here, and some theologians speculate that the remainder of the epistle is part of another letter of some sort.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,¹

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts² unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?³)

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;⁴

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

1 As the prisoner of the Lord, I thus beg you to walk worthily in the sort of lifestyle to which you were called,

2 With an attitude of humility and patience, bearing with one another in love,

3 And doing all you can to stay in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 [You see, everything is meant to function in perfect unity.] There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in the same single hope of your calling.

5 There is one Lord, the faith, and a single baptism [into Christ].

6 There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But every one of us is given a dispensation of grace as Christ chooses to dole his gift out.

8 This is why it is said about him: **When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.**

9 Now since he *ascended*, it is clear that he beforehand *descended* into the bowels of Hades within the earth.

10 He who descended is also the same one who ascended far above sky and space, so that he might fill [and have authority over] absolutely everything.

11 And the **“gifts”** he gave was to leave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some as pastors who are able to teach those under them.

12-13 He left these behind for the perfecting of the

the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight⁵ of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.⁶

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.⁷

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation⁸ the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not:⁹ let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication¹⁰ proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

righteous, and for the work of the ministry, and for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come to perfect unity in the faith and knowledge of the son of God, to a mature man grown complete in the fullness of Christ.

14 Thus, we will no longer be as children, tossed this way and that, and blown about by every different wave of doctrine on the part of dishonest men and their cunning craftiness who lie in wait to deceive us.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow up to be like Christ, our head, in all ways.

16 For it is Christ from whom the whole body is perfectly joined together by what every joint supplies according to the way each is designed to function, helping the body overall to build itself up in perfected love.

17 And so I say this, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as other Gentiles do, according to their own vain logic born from unregenerate minds,

18 Having their understanding darkened because they are alienated from the life of God through their closed-minded ignorance because of the spiritual blindness of their heart.

19 These, no longer having a conscience to convict them, have given themselves over to immorality, and now zealously pursue all sorts of uncleanness.

20 But you have not learned these sorts of things through Christ.

21-24 Assuming you *have* heard what he teaches, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, put off, as concerns your old lifestyle, the old man, which is corrupt with deceitful urges; and instead adopt a completely different mindset, putting on the new man, which, in God's image, is created to live in righteousness and true holiness.

25 So put away lying, and **speak every man truth with his neighbour**, for we are all body parts together.

26 **Be ye angry, and sin not.** Don't let the sun go down before you have put your anger away,

27 Nor give the devil a stronghold over you.

28 Let he who was a thief no longer steal. Instead, let him get a job and put his hands to work at honest labor, that he may have something to give the less fortunate.

29 Let no profane, demeaning, or unedifying words come out of your mouth. Instead, speak that which is edifying, so that it will minister grace [and build up those who hear you].

30 Don't sadden the Holy Spirit of God, who has sealed you until the Day of Redemption:

31 Cast away all bitterness, wrath, anger, shouting, slander, and malice,

32 And be kind to one another. Be tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God, in Christ, has forgiven you.

1. Earle points out this is a fascinating verse in Greek, which employs all three genders of the Greek word "One." The point must also be made that "one baptism" does not exclude other baptisms, such as baptism in the Spirit, since Hebrews 6:2 reveals there is more than one sort of baptism. Paul here refers to water baptism alone.

2. In opposition to the incorrect doctrine of "Nine gifts of the Spirit" based upon the word "gifts" arbitrarily added to the text of 1 Cor. 12:1, these are the true "gifts of the Spirit"—i.e., people and offices in the church.

3. Unfortunately, some false doctrine has arisen from this verse relating how Christ descended into the realm of the dead (which was thought to be in the bowels of the earth). It does *not* mean Christ went to the Lake of Fire and suffered in flames to atone for our sins, or that Jesus suffered at the hands of demons after death.

4. Incorrectly taught as the "five-fold ministry," there are actually only four offices mentioned here. "Pastors and teachers" is meant to be one office, and is better translated as a "pastor who can teach," or a "teaching pastor," or "pastor-teacher."

5. Holiness type folks love to go beyond the Scripture and label gambling a sin when there isn't one word in Scripture saying that. However, we have here one of the only references in the Bible to gambling, for "sleight" actually refers to playing a dice game where the thrower is cheating.
6. The Knox translation of the Vulgate renders this wordy verse in a better fashion: "*On him all the body depends; it is organized and unified by each contact with the source which supplies it; and thus, each limb, receiving the active power it needs, achieves its natural growth, building itself up through [love].*"
7. This means to not be worldly-minded, and to conform one's thinking to what the Scripture teaches, adopting God's attitudes.
8. "Conversation" means, of course, "lifestyle."
- 9 A quote from Psalm 4:4 in the Septuagint, which differs from the normal Hebrew version.
10. This doesn't mercenarily refer to cursing and swearing, but worthless speech of any sort.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 5

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.
 3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;
 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting¹, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks¹.
 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater,² hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.
 6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.³
 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.
 8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:
 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit⁴ is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)
 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.
 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.
 12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.
 13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.
 14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.⁵
 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.
 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.⁶
 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs⁷, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.
 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 5

1 Follow God's ways as dear children of His should.
 2 And walk in [selfless] love just as Christ also loved and gave himself up for us as an offering and sacrifice, a delightful aroma to God.
 3 But let not sexual sin, uncleanness, or greed be seen in any form among you as this unacceptable for the righteous.
 4 Neither let obscene, foolish, or profane talk escape your lips, for this is not acceptable either. Instead, let your mouth be filled with thanksgiving.
 5 You can be sure of this: No one who sleeps with prostitutes, nor those who are impure, nor those who are greedy—which is idolatry—has any share in the inheritance of the Kingdom of Christ, and God.
 6 Let no man deceive you [into thinking these things are acceptable] with crafty arguments, for it is because of sins like these that the wrath of God is going to fall on the children of those who refuse to believe the Gospel.
 7 So do not be persuaded by such lies and become co-conspirators with people who do these things.
 8 For there were times in your past when you were children of darkness. But now you are lights in the Lord, so walk as children of light.
 9 Remember the fruit of light is found in all goodness, righteousness, and truth,
 10 Which proclaim what is acceptable to the Lord.
 11 And have no friendship with the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead speak out against them.
 12 For it's shameful to even talk about the impure acts people commit in secret.
 13 But such wrongdoing becomes seen for what it is when it is exposed to the light, and the light shows things as they really are.
 14 This is why it is said: *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead*--and Christ shall give you light.
 15 So be careful about what sort of lifestyle you have, not living like fools, but as wise men,
 16 Making the most of the time you have on earth, because these are evil days that we live in.
 17 So don't be airheads, but instead understand what the will of the Lord is.
 18-20 *Don't get drunk with wine*, which leads to ungodliness; but keep being filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and singing in Tongues, singing and making melodies in your hearts to the Lord. Also, make sure, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to also give thanks to God the Father at all times and in every circumstance.
 21 And give place to one another out of reverence for God.
 22 Wives, give place to your husbands as you would the Lord.
 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the church; and he is the savior of the body.

Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

24 Therefore, as the church yields to, and obeys Christ, so wives should do likewise with their husbands in everything.

25-27 Meanwhile, husbands, you should love your wives with the same [selfless, sacrificial] love Christ had toward the church that he gave himself for, that he might set it apart and cleanse it through a washing imparted by the Message, so that he might present it to himself as a glorious church with no disqualifying spots, wrinkles, or anything similar, that it might be holy and unblemished [as a sacrificial offering should be].

28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as much as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife, loves himself.

29 For no man ever hated his own flesh body; but he nourishes and takes care of it even as the Lord does the church.

30 For we are members of his body—his flesh, and his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery, but I'm speaking of the relationship between Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless, let every one of you make a special point of loving his wife as he does himself; and let the wife see to it that she reverences her husband.

1. Paul uses a word play here on the words *eutrapelia* (jesting, or off-color talk) and *eucharistia* (thanksgiving).

2. It's interesting that Paul here equates greed with the sin of idolatry.

3. Again, "**children of disobedience**" can be understood as the segment of humanity who refuse to believe the Gospel, and live their lives their own way.

4. "**Spirit**" was a modification to the text in later centuries. The proper word here is "**light**," just as is being used in the prior verse.

5. This is not a quote from Scripture, but is thought to be a verse from an ancient baptismal hymn or part of the liturgy for Rosh Hashanah.

6. "**Be filled with the Spirit**" is more correctly rendered as: "**Keep being filled with the Spirit.**" Contrary to the typical beliefs of many Charismatics and non-Charismatics alike, reception of the Spirit's power is not a one-time event. We need to continually be refilled with the anointing of the Spirit for even everyday life.

7. An apparent reference to singing in Tongues.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 6

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)¹

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

5 Servants², be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 6

1 Teenagers, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is proper.

2 Honour thy father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise:

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 Meanwhile, fathers, don't treat your children in such a way that you [needlessly] provoke them to wrath. Instead, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

5 Slaves, obey those who are your earthly masters with fear and trembling; and do so sincerely, as you would Christ.

6-7 Don't do it only when you're being watched, like men-pleasers. But do so as slaves of Christ, performing the will of God from the heart, displaying efficiency and a good attitude as if you were doing this for the Lord, rather than men.

8 For you know that any good thing a man does, the same shall receive a reward from God whether he is a slave or free.

9 You masters do likewise! Don't threaten and mistreat your slaves, for you have the same Master in heaven,

him.
 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.³
 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,⁴ that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
 15 And your feet shod⁵ with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God⁶:
 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit⁷, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
 21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:
 22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.
 23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
 24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

who does not show partiality.
 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.
 11 [The church should] put on the whole armor of God that you all may be able to withstand the tricks of the devil.
 12 For our battle is not against people, but with the spirits *behind* the people: Demonic principalities and Powers [who carry out Satan's will] that rule over the darkness of this world, and various other wicked spirits in the heavens.
 13 Thus, you should take up the whole armor of God, that you all might be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, stay on your feet.
 14 Stand therefore, having your loins clothed with truth, and wearing the breastplate of righteousness [which is faith and love];
 15 And on your feet, the spiked shoes of readiness to march out and proclaim the "Good News" of peace [with God] at a moment's notice.
 16 And above all, you should use the shield of faith to extinguish every fire arrow of the [devil].
 17-18 Keep on the helmet of your salvation [as the protector of your thoughts], and wield the sword of the Spirit--which are the things God has spoken--as you always pray and entreat God through the use of Spiritual language. Persevere in watching and entreating God for all the righteous.
 19 Pray also that God would give me words and courage to open my mouth and boldly proclaim the mystery of the Gospel,
 20 For which, as an ambassador, I am in chains. Pray that I might speak boldly as I should.
 21 So that you can know of all that is going on, and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister of the Lord, will bring you up to speed.
 22 I sent him to you for that very purpose, that you might know what is going on with us; and that he might comfort your hearts.
 23 Peace to the brethren, and love and faith, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
 24 Grace be with all those who sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. A point must be made that while Paul has quoted one of the 10 Commandments, his intention is not to uphold the body of the 10 Commandments as a stripped-down version of the Torah that is a replacement for the 613, functioning as some canon of justification against which Christians' behavior will be measured. He simply is underscoring how important this precept--which has always existed--is. Certainly, he expects Christians to honor their parents, avoid murder, adultery, etc.--not because they are in the 10 Commandments, but because those sins are universally forbidden, and have always been forbidden, which is why Cain was judged without having ever heard of the 10 Commandments, and why the world was destroyed in the Flood before the 10 Commandments were ever given.

2. The word means "slaves."

3. Paul here outlines a hierarchical structure of demonic forces:

Principalities. These are apparent overlords (generals, if you will) over specific nations. If you refer back to Daniel 10, you'll see an example of "the prince of Persia," one of these overlords who restrained the angel Gabriel for 21 days from reaching Daniel with the answer to his prayer. *Principalities* are unquestionably fallen angels.

Powers. These may refer to demonic forces in charge of specific territories or cities within a larger state. In classic Judaism, *Powers* were considered to be the angelic entities through which God worked to accomplish His will. Paul may have concluded there was a demonic counterpart. Jesus, in the Gospels (Matt. 24:29), may tie *Powers* to fallen spiritual entities in the heavens. *Spiritual wickedness in high places.* This probably refers to elemental spirits of the heavens, who in ancient mythology were thought to push the stars around. (As noted in the commentary in James, there were legends among the Jews that some of the stars rebelled against God at the beginning of time. Christ also suggests in the Gospels that there are evil beings in the heavens somehow connected to the stars, for the stars will fall with His return to earth and the overthrow of evil in the heavenly realms.) However, Paul might be referring to the demonic influences upon unsaved people--like Nero--who are influenced by Satan to promote the devil's plan for mankind, although this is unlikely given the fact that the context of these verses is demonic forces.

4. Whole books have needlessly been written on what the “**armor of God**” is, and how to use it. All one need do is heed what Paul has been teaching here, and in virtually all his epistles: Serve God with all one’s heart, and love others as God has loved you, and you will be walking in all the power of God’s armor. Beyond that, a critical point missed by many is that Paul was drawing not upon the medieval knight for his example, but the Roman legionnaire! The knight and the legionnaire had totally dichotomous fighting styles. Some, equating this passage with the knight, treat spiritual warfare as the knight viewed combat: One-on-one combat. The legionnaire, however, fought in an entirely different way—he fought as a group, supported by other soldiers at his side! Individual combat was the last thing the Roman legion wanted to engage in, for it was their strength as a single fighting unit that made them unbeatable. When they *were* forced out of their group tactics into individual combat, more often than not, they would lose the battle. Thus, this verse refers not to the individual Christian putting on God’s armor to withstand the devil—it refers to the church, as a whole, doing that!

5. “**Your feet shod**” is an idiom meaning to be ready to start on a journey at a moment’s notice, but Paul may be using the term mindful of the Roman legionnaire’s spiked sandals that allowed him to stand firm or move forward against the enemy without slipping. Paul’s intent may be to remind the Ephesians that God’s wrath has been averted, and now they are in complete harmony and peace with Him through Christ, and need fear nothing, so they can move forward or stand firm, confident of God’s being with them.

6. The term “**word of God**” is not referring to the Scriptures (because it is the word *rhema*, not *logos*). Instead, it refers to either the *message* or *proclamation* of God the people have been taught, and also God’s prophetic pronouncements, which *can* be found either in Scripture, or given to us personally (1 Tim. 1:18).

7. A probable reference to praying in Tongues.

PHILIPPIANS

Philippi was an important city, having been founded by Alexander the Great's father. As the site where the old Roman Republic fell with the defeat of Brutus and Cassius by Augustus and his allies, it also became the place where the Roman Empire was born.

This epistle, or combination of several epistles, was written by Paul in the same timeframe as Colossians and Ephesians, sometime between 61-63 AD, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

Philippi was the first church Paul started in that part of the world as a result of a vision in Acts 16, and interestingly--although he sees a man in the vision begging him to come to that area--the first converts here were women, including Lydia, an important businesswoman. Paul seemed to have a special fondness for this church and mentions (Phil. 4:15) that only this church regularly supported him financially.

Both Luke and Epaphroditus may have headed the church there at different times.

Citizens in Philippi enjoyed the highest level of Roman citizenship, along with exemption from most taxes. The people were justifiably proud of their citizenship, and Paul makes use of this fact in the epistle, appealing to them to live out Christian lives with as much pride and dedication as they did their Roman citizenship, keeping in mind their true citizenship was in heaven.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops¹ and deacons:
2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,
5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;
6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:
7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.
8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels² of Jesus Christ.
9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;
10 That ye may approve things that are excellent;³ that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;
11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.
12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;⁴
13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;
14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 1

1 **P**aul and Timothy, the slaves of Jesus Christ, to all the righteous in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with its bishops and deacons.
2 Grace and peace be to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3-5 I thank my God every time you come to mind, always praying joyfully for you, in every prayer I make, because of the way you partnered with me in the Gospel from the first day you heard it until now.
6 And I am confident of this very thing: That He who began a good work in you will continue it until He completes it in the Day of Jesus Christ!
7 It's only right for me to think this way because you are all in my heart since you have been partakers of my grace both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel.
8 For God bears me witness how much I long for you with the tenderness of Jesus Christ himself.
9-11 And I pray that your love will abound, increasing in all knowledge and discernment, so that from now, until the Day of Christ, you may prize the things of *true* value, and thus be sincere and without offense, being filled with the fruits of righteousness that are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.
12-13 But I want you to understand, brethren, that the things that have befallen me have ultimately happened for the promotion of the Gospel, so that the reason for my being chained in Christ's name has been made known throughout all the Praetorian camp, and everywhere else.
14 Thus, many other brethren in the Lord, being confident by my chains, are made all the more bold to speak the Message without fear.

the word⁵ without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.⁶

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation⁷ through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

27 Only let your conversation⁸ be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.⁹

15 Some indeed preach Christ out of envy and strife, but others preach him out of good will.

16 The former preach Christ out of contention, not in sincerity, thinking to add to the suffering of my imprisonment.

17 The latter do so out of love, knowing I am holding strong my position at the front lines of battle to defend the Gospel.

18 But what does it matter? Either way, whether in pretense or in truth, people are being preached to about Christ; and in that I rejoice, and will continue to rejoice.

19-20 For I know that all this shall be for my ultimate delivery through your prayers and the strength of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, just as I believe and have confidence in. So in no way will I be intimidated, but instead—as I have always done—I will go on boldly so that Christ, as always, will be glorified in my body whether it be through my life or by my death.

21 For me to live, is [to live for] Christ; and to die is gain [for me personally].

22 But if I continue to live this mortal life, it is only to produce fruit in the Gospel. But which is better: To live or to die? That, I'm not sure of.

23 For I am torn between the two, having a desire to be loosed from this world and be with Christ, which is far better than remaining here.

24 But for me to stay here is better for you.

25-26 I am certain of that, so I will remain here and continue on with you for your development and joy of faith so that your rejoicing in Jesus Christ may be even greater by my coming to you again.

27-28 Until then, just let your lifestyle be one that is appropriate for followers of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I see you in person, or else hear from others while I am absent, I can rely on the fact that you stand firm in one spirit and mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel without fearing your adversaries. This will be to them a testimony and sign to them of their coming perdition, but to you it will be a sign of your coming salvation, which is from God.

29 For to you has been given, on behalf of Christ, the honor of not only believing in him, but also to suffer for his sake,

30 Fighting the same battle yourselves that you have seen me fight, and hear that I fight even now.

1. Interestingly, Paul refers to “**bishops**” in the plural, suggesting that there may have been more than one bishop in a single area, in comparison to the form that later developed in the church. However, by the 4th century, Chrysostom theorized that the word was being used loosely by Paul, and included all the chief elders in the area.

2. This is the correct translation, but Paul’s point is that he feels the tender longing of Christ for the Philippian believers.

3. Better paraphrased as: “*That you may prize the things of true value...*”

4. What an excellent point by Paul, for the truth is most of his epistles were written in time of imprisonment and hardship! This fact also holds true for many of us, for there are times when God may actually do the most He will do through our lives in times of greatest hardship, or when we may feel furthest from Him, or when we may be most aware of our own sinfulness and failings!

5. “**The word**” is not referring to the Scripture here, but to the declaration of God’s redemption through Christ.

6. Paul is not necessarily saying that people who preach the Gospel from wrong motives accomplish anything for God; rather, he is glad that through the efforts of both hypocrite and saint the name of Christ is becoming a household word.

7. “**Salvation**” here refers to physical deliverance from bondage, not spiritual salvation.

8. “**Conversation**” means “**lifestyle**.”

9. Better paraphrased as: “*Fighting the same battle yourselves that you have seen me fight, and hear that I fight now.*”

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 2

1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 2

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ...
If any comfort in his love...
If any fellowship of the Spirit...

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.¹
 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.
 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.
 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:²
 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
 12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.³
 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.⁴
 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:
 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;
 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.
 17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.
 18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.
 19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.
 20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.
 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.
 22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.
 23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.
 24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.
 25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.
 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had

If there are any bowels of compassion in you--
 2 Then maximize my joy by all of you pursuing the same goals with the same sort of love, in one accord and with one mind.
 3 Let nothing be done through strife or self-aggrandizement, but with an attitude of humility, let each one esteem his brother as better than himself.
 4 Don't just worry about your own good--concern yourselves with the problems your brothers are going through as well.
 5 Have the same sort of attitude [--that of a servant--] that Christ Jesus had.
 6-7 Though existing in the form of God, and not considering it to be usurping anything to be equal with God the Father, he made himself insignificant, and took the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of a mortal man.
 6-7 [*Alternate reading*]: Though existing in the form of God, he did not consider that form something to remain in, but instead made himself insignificant and took the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of a mortal man.
 8 And being found in the form of a mere man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death on the cross.
 9-11 Because of [his willingness to humble himself, and take on the lowly nature of humanity in order to experience death for us,] God has highly exalted him, and given him a name [and rank] that is above every other so that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, whether that of beings in heaven, on earth, or in the realm of the dead; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
 12-13 So, my beloved brethren, as you have obeyed before--not just when I was there, but even more zealously in my absence--work to develop the full fruit of your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who energizes you to perform the good things He wants you to do.
 14-16 Do everything without grumbling and arguing, that you may be blameless and innocent, and sons of God against whom no one can make a legitimate accusation in the midst of a wicked and perverse nation among whom you shine as lights in the world as you uphold the Message of Life. And if you do this, I shall rejoice in the Day of Christ that I have neither run nor labored pointlessly.
 17 Yes, and even if my blood is poured out as a sacrificial offering for your faith, I rejoice both on my own and with you all.
 18 And you should rejoice with me as well for the same reason!
 19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus that I shall shortly send Timothy to you, that I may be comforted when he reports back about you.
 20 I have no one else devoted to loving and caring about you the way *he* does.
 21 For the others all worry about their own agendas, rather than the agenda of Jesus Christ.
 22 But you know about Timothy--that he has proven himself by serving with me in the Gospel like a son serves his father.
 23 So I hope to send him there as soon as I know what my fate here will be.
 24 But I have confidence in the Lord that I will also come there soon.

been sick.
 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.
 28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.
 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:
 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

25 Even so, I thought it necessary to send Epaphroditus--my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier--back to you, since he was the apostle you sent to minister to *my* needs.
 26 For he missed you greatly, and was grieved because you had heard he was sick [and were worried about him].
 27 And sick he was--even close to death. But God had mercy on both of us, lest he die and I have sorrow on top of sorrow.
 28 Therefore, I am all the more anxiously sending him back so you can rejoice when you see him, and my own concerns can be assuaged.
 29 So receive him joyfully in the Lord, and treat him--and people like him--with respect,
 30 Because it was for the work of Christ that he nearly died, having no regard for his own life, to do for me in your name what you could not do from a distance.

1. Paul now begins to deal with some of the schisms in the church between people jockeying for positions of authority. This very sort of situation may have been why bishops began to be limited in number.
2. What a tragedy that some people teaching we are "little gods" have woven an apostate doctrine from these verses. Paul's point is not that we should think ourselves somehow "equal with God," but his point is that Christ, who *was* equal with God, became a servant, ministering to others and going to the cross for their good! Also, verses 6-11 are thought to be an early Christian hymn.
3. Paul is not saying here that the Philippians aren't fully saved, and that they need to do some meritorious works or perfect their lifestyle to make it into heaven. His point is that *they are* saved, and that they should walk out the salvation they already have, for it can always be lost if a man chooses to go the wrong way.
4. A verse showing that it is only through the empowerment of the Spirit that sanctification becomes more than works of the flesh.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 3

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.
 2 Beware of dogs¹, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.
 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.
 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:
 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;
 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.
 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:
 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;
 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.
 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.
 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 3

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. I don't mind repeating this to you because it is an admonition for your own good.
 2 Beware of [Cynic philosophers and their esoteric teachings]. Beware of those who do evil. Beware of those mutilators [who teach mandatory circumcision and Torah observance].
 3-4 For we Christians are the *true* circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus and placing no confidence in our own fleshly [Torah observance]--though if a man could have confidence in that, *I* certainly could! Indeed, if any man could feel secure through his own [Torah observance and background in Judaism,] I could feel even *more* secure!
 5 I was circumcised on the eighth day of my birth, a member of the people of Israel from the tribe of Benjamin. I was, in fact, a Hebrew among Hebrews--being a Pharisee, in so far as Torah observance goes.
 6 And with all zeal, I persecuted the church, while at the same time being blameless in so far as the righteousness that is in the Torah was concerned.
 7 But things that were once gain to me, I now consider lost for Christ.
 8-11 Yes, undoubtedly I count everything to be worth losing for the priceless knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things--considering them dung--that I may obtain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness based on Torah observance, but the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ alone, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, conforming to the pattern of his death if by any means I can likewise attain the resurrection from the dead.
 12 I am not saying that I have attained Christ's perfection, or that I am perfect. But I follow in his example so that I

things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.²
 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.
 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.
 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:
 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)
 20 For our conversation³ is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:
 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

may become all that Christ Jesus wants me to be.
 13 No, brethren, I do not consider myself to have become all I can be, but this thing I do: Forgetting the things of the past, and looking on to what lies ahead,
 14 I press toward the finish line to win the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.
 15 Let us, as many as are mature, have this attitude; and if there are also improper attitudes or beliefs still among you, God will reveal it [and correct you].
 16 Nevertheless, let us be sure to walk in the same light and lifestyle we *have* been walking in.
 17 Brethren, follow my example, and take note of those who have the same mindset as I do, using them as inspiration too.
 18 For many walk, as I have often told you before and now tell you again with tears, as enemies of the cross of Christ.
 19 Their end will be destruction, for their God is their own belly. They glory in shameful things, and they concern themselves with the things of this world.
 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we also look for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ--
 21 Who will change our vile body, and fashion it like his own glorious body, according to his power to bring all things into subjection to him.

1. Paul's intended meaning of the word "**dogs**" is not abundantly clear. The word was an insult used by many Jews against Gentiles, and he may be turning it back upon them. It was also a slang term for homosexuals. I personally think, however, he is using it as a slang term for Cynic philosophers, who were also referred to as "dogs" in that era because of their rather unusual lifestyles that included abandoning responsibility to perfect their own notion of virtue through esoteric spiritual development. Their philosophies were similar to Buddhist teachings in some ways.
 2. Better paraphrased as: "*Let us, as many as are mature, have this attitude; and if there are also improper attitudes or beliefs still among you, God will reveal it, and correct you.*"
 3. In this very rare instance, "**conversation**" actually means "**citizenship**." Paul is relating that the true citizenship of the Christian is in heaven. This verse is also another indictment against "Soul sleep."

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.
 2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.¹
 3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow,² help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.
 4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.
 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.
 6 Be careful³ for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.⁴
 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.
 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, whom I dearly love and long for, and consider to be my joy and my crown--stand fast in the Lord!
 2 I beg Euodias, and beg Syntyche, that they be unified in the Lord.
 3 And I ask you, my true Suzugos, to help the women who worked with me, Clement, and our other laborers in the Gospel, whose names are all written in the Scroll of Life.
 4 [Remember--] rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say it: rejoice!
 5 Let your easy-going nature be known to all men, for the Lord is very soon to return.
 6 Don't be consumed with worry about anything, but in every need pray and make petition with thanksgiving, and in this way make your requests known to God.
 7 And in return, the peace of God, which is based on knowledge and precepts far surpassing carnal human understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds secure through Christ Jesus.
 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are worthy of love, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue or any praise in them, meditate on these things.
 9 And the things you have either learned, been told by me, heard about, or seen me do--do them, and the God of

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.⁵
 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.
 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.⁶
 14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.
 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.⁷
 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.
 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.
 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.
 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
 20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
 21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.
 22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.
 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

peace shall be with you.
 10 But I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that your concern for me has been sparked anew, even though it was there before, but you had no way to do anything about it.
 11 I don't say that because I need you to donate funds to me, for I have learned to be content in whatever state I am in.
 12 I know how to live in poverty and prosperity. Everywhere, and in all situations, I follow the principle of contentment, whether full or hungry, whether in abundance or need.
 13 Yes, I can do anything I need to do, and endure anything I have to endure, through Christ who empowers me.
 14 Even so, you have done well to come to my aid in my present afflictions.
 15 You Philippians already know that in the beginning of my ministry of the Gospel, when I left Macedonia, no other church but you understood the principle of giving and receiving, and shared their resources with me.
 16 Even when I was in Thessalonica, you twice sent donations to me.
 17 [I remind you of this] not because I want another gift from you, but I desire that you bank blessings in heaven for *yourselves*.
 18 But I have all I need, and am abounding in what counts. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things that were sent from you—which are a delightful aroma, and a sacrifice acceptable and greatly pleasing to God.
 19 And my God shall supply all *your* needs from *His* riches, in glory, through Christ Jesus!
 20 Now to God our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.
 21 Greet all the righteous in Christ Jesus there. The brethren with me here greet you too.
 22 All the righteous here salute you, especially those of Caesar's household.
 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

1. Apparently, these two women elders in the church had some friction between them.
 2. While the word does mean "yokefellow," given the context, Paul is referring to a man named Suzugos.
 3. "Careful" means "anxious."
 4. This verse is almost universally misunderstood as some sort of supernatural peace that can't be understood, given the circumstances a person is in. However, Paul's use of the word, and context, seems rather to be speaking of a confidence in God based on understanding His sovereignty and precepts.
 5. Paul is expressing his gratitude that the Philippians' past support has blossomed afresh with his imprisonment.
 6. Although this verse is regularly quoted by Christians, it's almost never quoted in its proper context: that of being able to endure persecution and hardship without breaking.
 7. It's interesting to see that Paul talks about "receiving" in this verse, and it can only be understood as his affirming that God will return tangible blessing to those who have supported him out of their own means.

1st Timothy

1st Timothy, together with Titus and 2nd Timothy, comprise Paul's last epistles, and are known as the *Pastoral Epistles* because they include both practical directions for guiding the church, along with the qualifications for elders. 1st Timothy was written around 65 AD from Macedonia (northern Greece).

Timothy may have been the bishop of Ephesus. That, or he resided in the city as Paul's representative. Tradition says he oversaw the church there until he was beaten to death at age 80. The apostle John is said to have lived with him until being exiled to Patmos. Timothy may even have been "**the angel of the church at Ephesus**" mentioned in Revelation.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;
2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.
3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,
4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.¹
5 Now the end² of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:
6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling³;
7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.
8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;
9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man,⁴ but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,
10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind⁵, for menstealers⁶, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;
11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.
12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;
13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief⁷.
14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.
15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.⁸
16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1 aul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the order of God our Savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope;
2 To Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.
3 You recall that I urged you to remain in Ephesus, while I went on to Macedonia so that you could order some to teach no other doctrines [but the true ones];
4 And not to become embroiled in [Jewish myths], and endless genealogies, which only raise pointless questions instead of focusing on the godly edification that comes through faith. So keep on doing this.
5-7 Now the whole point I was aiming for was to foster love with a pure heart, clear conscience, and sincere faith—which some, unfortunately, have lost sight of by turning back into pointless debate and argument, desiring to be Torah teachers when they don't understand what they are saying, nor the repercussions of what they are so confidently espousing.
8 Now we know that the Torah is good if a man uses it in the way it was meant to be used.
9-11 For we know that the Torah was not made for a righteous man, but for the libertine and the disobedient, the ungodly and the sinner, the unholy and profane, murderers of parents, murderers of men, whoremongers, homosexuals, slave-traders, liars, perjurers—and anything else contrary to the sound doctrine that is in the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was placed in my trust.
12-13 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who empowered me—for he considered me to be faithful, and put me into the ministry even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man who did violence to the church. But I obtained mercy because I did it in ignorance, being unable to believe [in the concept of a crucified Messiah].
14 But the grace of our Lord [changed me, and abundantly filled me with the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus].
15 This is a comment you can absolutely believe: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I was, and am, the worst.
16 But this is exactly *why* I obtained mercy: That through my experience [--of Christ first saving the absolutely most hopeless and most undeserving case--] I could be an example of the patience of Jesus Christ toward those who would eventually believe in him and receive everlasting life [*through* my testimony]!
17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only

longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.
 17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.⁹
 18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies¹⁰ which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;
 19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:
 20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan,¹¹ that they may learn not to blaspheme.

wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
 18-19 This is the commission I give to you, son Timothy, which is in accord with the prophetic utterances that were spoken over you as the sword by which you could wage a good fight and hold onto your faith with a clear conscience—unlike some, unfortunately, who have abandoned the faith, and shipwrecked themselves.
 20 Hymenaeus and Alexander are two good examples, and I have given them over to Satan so they can learn not to blaspheme.

1. It is here that we begin to see the problems that have occasioned the writing of this letter: In contradiction to the doctrine of justification by faith, we have Judaizers once again trying to mix Jewish culture and Torah with grace, promoting the use of Jewish genealogies (probably as a means of advancing Jews in position of leadership over Gentile believers).
2. The word here for “**end**” (*telos*) is the same as that used in the verse, “**For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth**” (Rom. 10:14). The word refers to a goal, not to some sort of coming to an end.
3. “**Jangling**” here means meaningless, pointless babble that serves no useful purpose or actual instruction. The sense is again, “Get off this Torah stuff, and focus on Christ!”
4. Paul here is focusing on one aspect of the Law, which is to keep people from doing wrong to others. No godly man, for instance, needs to be instructed that he should not steal or kill. The wicked do, and the Law points out the righteous judgment of God for those who do break the commandments. The next aspect of the Law reveals the sinfulness of mankind and the necessity for repentance and atonement. Where the false teachers in Ephesus kept veering from course was to go back to making obedience to the Law and its rabbinic ordinances the determining factor in being approved of by God. One of Paul’s major revelations seems to have been that the true salvation through faith, rather than obedience, would produce godly character in the Christian and bring about a change in nature that accomplished practical righteousness without the need of artificially trying to counterfeit this by learning and obeying commandments. A continuing problem faced by the apostle, however, was that many believers simply would not focus on Christ, and continued living carnal, self-centered lives that produced the fruit of sinful behavior. In cases like these, Paul had to retreat to the Law to remind them of the consequences of sin as a means of telling them to get their priorities straight.
5. An absolute reference to homosexuals and unrepentant homosexuality.
6. “**Menstealers**” refers to kidnappers and slave-traders, harkening back to the 8th commandment that, in direct context, does not refer to robbery or shoplifting, but to kidnapping for ransom or to sell as a slave.
7. It is very interesting that the word here for “**unbelief**” is not the one referring to a stubborn refusal to accept the truth, but rather is one for a weakness of faith. Paul is probably saying that—as Jews and Moslems do today—the notion of a Messiah coming and dying for the sins of humanity, rather than coming to rule as a king, was simply ridiculous to him.
8. How fascinating to see that as Paul nears the end of his life, his humility and self-image have matured to the point where he no longer considers himself as good as the rest of the apostles, or least of the apostles, but now the chief of all sinners!
9. Many people miss the fact that this is a prayer to God the Father, not to Christ.
10. Interestingly, Paul here seems to refer to an incident in Timothy’s life where personal prophecies had been spoken over him. Undoubtedly, Paul wished Timothy to view these as “anchors” with which to focus his faith and confidence so that, regardless of the circumstances he found himself in, he could be assured that what God had spoken would be manifested in his life.
11. This passage has puzzled many, for it is unique to Paul, and some have viewed it as suggesting some sort of formal excommunication and belief that by “removing the protection of God from their lives,” they will undergo some sort of trials, and repent. That may be true, but the term is also an Eastern idiom that means something along the lines of: “Let them stew in their own pot, and reap the fruit of their actions.” Thus, if it is not some sort of liturgical excommunication, it is a confidence that these men will reap what they have sown, and be sorry for what they have done.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;
 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.
 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;
 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.
 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;¹
 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.
 7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

1 I therefore encourage you, first of all, to see to it that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all men:
 2 For kings and anyone else in authority, that we Christians can lead a quiet, peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.
 3 This is good and acceptable in the eyes of God our Savior,
 4 Who desires all men to be saved, and to come to knowledge of the truth.
 5 For there is one God and one mediator [who makes peace] between God and humanity: the man Christ Jesus,
 6 Who gave himself as a ransom on behalf of all men, and who, at the right time, was testified about [to all men, including the Gentiles].
 7 This is why I am ordained to be a preacher and apostle of his to teach the Gentiles faith and truth. When I say that, I am speaking the truth in Christ, and am not lying.

teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity².
 8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands,³ without wrath and doubting.
 9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;⁴
 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.
 11 Let the woman⁵ learn in silence with all subjection.
 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.⁶
 13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.
 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.⁷
 15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing,⁸ if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

7 [Alternate reading]: This is why I am ordained to be a faithful and true preacher and apostle of his to teach the Gentiles. When I say that, I am speaking the truth in Christ, and am not lying.
 8 I thus wish that men everywhere would pray [with a clear conscience and pure motives], without wrath and arguing.
 9-10 In like manner, I would wish that women would [reflect Christian attributes, and] adorn themselves in modest clothing chosen out of a sound mind, rather than [taking their identity from] elaborate coiffures, flashy jewelry, or designer clothes. It's far better that women professing godliness should stand out for *good deeds*.
 11 And let a wife learn placidly, in subjection to her husband.
 12 But I do not allow a wife to teach, nor to usurp authority from her husband; she should keep her opinions to herself.
 13 For Adam was formed first, and Eve came out of him later.
 14 And Adam wasn't the one who was deceived; it was the *woman* who was tricked into transgression.
 15 Even so, wives [will have a secure place in the marriage] if they have children, provided they also continue in faith, love, and holiness with a sober attitude.
 15 [Alternate reading]: Even so, women will be saved because of the childbearing [of the Messiah], provided they also continue in faith, love, and holiness with a sober attitude.

1. This verse often is misused to criticize Catholics for the notion of saints interceding for people on earth. The verse is saying both that Christ is the one acceptable bridge between God and man, and the one intercessor whose atonement God acknowledges. Throughout Scripture, Christians are otherwise commanded to intercede for one another in prayer, and thus act as general intercessors along with angels.
2. "Verity" means "truth."
3. "Praying with holy hands" here is being used as a euphemism for, "a clear conscience," or "with clean hands."
4. Another verse that has been misused to teach that women should dress like nuns. Paul's admonition is that women not look or act immodest or worldly.
5. The word here should be translated as "**wife**," rather than "**woman**." Likewise, the word "**man**" should be translated "**husband**."
6. This is not a prohibition against women teachers in the church. The context is one of Paul dealing with roles in marriage, and saying that the woman is not to "wear the pants" in the family. Women otherwise are theoretically open to all ministerial positions in the church with the one exception of being married pastors, which would place them in spiritual authority over their husbands. Even so, it would not be 100% impossible for God to call a woman to that role (consider Deborah, prophetess of Israel and wife of Lapidoth, who would have had spiritual authority over her husband and all men of Israel), but it would be unusual.
7. Adam, it should be noted, may not have been deceived, but he was certainly guilty of open rebellion, a worse sin than Eve's.
8. This verse has puzzled many, but really isn't that hard to understand. Paul is probably saying that the wife's position in the family is secured by having children because this made it more difficult for her to be divorced and gave her some rights that childless women did not have. (Hosea is recorded in Jewish tradition as using this fact to explain why he was reluctant to divorce *his* unfaithful wife.) Some texts also word this verse to indicate that the woman's influence lives on past her life through her descendants. Otherwise, some believe the "**childbearing**" refers to Christ's coming and atonement.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.
 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife,¹ vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;
 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;
 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;
 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)
 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.²
 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

1 You can certainly rely on the truth of this statement: If a man desires to hold the office of a church overseer, he desires a noble thing.
 2 An overseer must be of sterling reputation, a [non-polygamist], sober-minded, who behaves himself well and is quick to show hospitality. He should also be a good teacher.
 3 He should not make drinking alcohol a common practice, nor can he be hot-tempered, nor greedy for ill-gotten gain. He should be patient, and not one given to fighting, nor the sort who is covetous.
 4 He should show his success in soberly running his own household effectively, with well-behaved children--
 5 For if a man doesn't know how to oversee his own house, how can he hope to oversee the church of God?
 6 Not someone immature in the faith, lest he become puffed up with his own importance as happened with Satan, and likewise undergo condemnation.
 7 Moreover, he should have a good reputation even in the

8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine³, not greedy of filthy lucre;
 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.
 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers⁴, sober, faithful in all things.
 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.
 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.
 14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:
 15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.⁵
 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,⁶ justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

secular community, lest he fall into disrepute and be ensnared by the devil.
 8 Likewise, church elders must be dignified, not hypocrites, nor given to drinking too much wine or liquor, nor greedy for ill-gotten gain.
 9 They should hold the things once hidden about the faith, that are now revealed, with a clear conscience.
 10 Let them first be proved [in their solid grounding in the faith, and their effectiveness in working their way up to greater responsibilities]. After that, let them take on the position of elder, having been found to be blameless.
 11 Also, their wives must be dignified, rather than the sorts who yield their gossiping tongues to Satan's use. They must be sober-minded and faithful in all they do.
 12 Let the elders also be [non-polygamists] who rule their children and households well.
 13 Those who effectively carry out the office of an elder deservedly earn themselves a good reputation for more important duties, and will be used more boldly in the faith of Christ Jesus.
 14-15 I write these things to you in hope I can come to you shortly, though in the event it takes me a while, I want you to know how you should behave yourself in the House of God, which is the church of the Living God, and the pillar and ground of the truth.
 16 Unquestionably, great is the mystery [of our religion]: *[God] was manifested in human form, justified through the Spirit, seen by angels, preached about to the Gentiles, believed on by the world, and was received up into glory.*

1. This verse is commonly taught as Paul saying that a "**husband of one wife**" means "never divorced." Paul, in the author's view, is actually referring to non-polygamists. The qualifications here were essentially the same as in Judaism, wherein only non-polygamists were allowed to be elders and heads of the synagogues. (Remember that the Torah actually *commands* a polygamous marriage in some cases!) In that culture, divorce had no bearing on being an elder.
2. Better paraphrased as: "*Not someone immature in the faith, lest he become puffed up with his own importance as happened with Satan, and likewise undergo condemnation.*"
3. In opposition to some churches that have improved upon the Scripture by requiring elders and pastors to be teetotalers, Paul absolutely *does not* require someone in the service of God to abstain from alcohol. This false teaching has gone so far as to see some theologians invent a ridiculous teaching that Paul's "**wine**" was an unfermented grape juice! One need only visit Italy or the Middle East to realize what a preposterous notion this is. Alcoholic wine was, and is, an absolute staple within the cultures of Rome, Judaism, and Greece. Were this not the case and Paul was referring to unfermented grape juice, he would not have used the words "**Much wine**," since there is no need to warn against drinking too much unfermented grape juice!
4. "**Slanderers**" actually comes from a word translated "**devil**" or "**diabolical**."
5. This verse about the church being the "**pillar**" of truth is often used by Catholics to affirm the Catholic Church's primacy above all other denominations. As the argument goes, since Paul only mentions the church in the singular, thus only one particular denomination--the Roman Catholic Church--holds ultimate spiritual truth. However, while Paul does speak in the singular here, he repeatedly speaks in the plural in places like Romans 16:16, 1 Cor. 7:17, 1 Cor. 11:16, and so on. Jesus also, in the Book of Revelation, appears to make distinctions between the various churches, treating them as entirely separate entities with no single overseer other than Himself directly. The verse here thus cannot be used to justify the notion that there is only one denomination God recognizes. Rather, it is those individuals who walk in truth who are "the church," regardless of what denomination they may belong to.
6. Whether one is Trinitarian or not, this verse at least is a good proof text against the teachings of those who wish to deny the Deity of Christ on some level. However, to be fair, not all manuscripts have "**God**" in the verse, but some good ones have "**He**."

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;
 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;
 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.¹
 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

1 Now the Holy Spirit expressly says that as we near the end of the Age, some shall depart from the true faith, listening to seducing spirits and the demonic doctrines they teach.
 2 These hypocrites will speak lies because their consciences will be scarred over with a red-hot iron.
 3 They will insist people practice celibacy to be in the church, and command them to abstain from [certain meats], which God created to be eaten with thanksgiving by those who know and believe the truth.
 4-5 For every creature of God is good, and there is no

5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.
 6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.
 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.
 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.
 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.
 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.²
 11 These things command and teach.
 12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.
 13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.
 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.³
 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.
 16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

basis for refusing to eat it, so long as one eats with thanksgiving, for what is eaten is sanctified by God's decree, and prayer.
 6 If you remind the brethren of these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished by the teachings and good doctrine of the faith that you have attained.
 7 But turn away from godless debates and old wives' tales. Instead, exercise to build up godliness.
 8 For all physical exercise can do is build up one's muscles—but godliness produces good in every area of life, producing God's sort of life both in this world and the next.
 9 Trust what I say about this, and accept it.
 10 For this is why we toil and endure reproach: Because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men [--be they Jew or Gentile--] and specifically for those who recognize that and come to faith in Christ.
 11 Therefore, command and teach these points.
 12 No one should disrespect you because of your young age, but counter that, if it arises, by being an example to the believers in teaching, lifestyle, attitude, faith, and purity.
 13 Until I can come, focus on articulating [the Scriptures], exhortation, and doctrine.
 14 Don't neglect the gift that was put in you through the prophecy that was given, and the ordination through laying on of hands by the elders.
 15 Meditate on all I've told you, and give yourself wholly to these teachings, that all may see your edification through them.
 16 Be diligent and conscientious in what you do with the doctrine, for in doing so and continuing in it, you will save both you and those who hear you [from the judgment to come upon the earth].

1. For centuries, the Catholic Church has unfairly been slandered by these verses. First, Paul himself says that these false doctrines will arise in the "latter times"—i.e., as the end of the Age approaches. Second, the man-made doctrine of priestly celibacy is ancient, not modern. Third, not all rites within the Catholic Church mandate priestly celibacy; only the Western rites of the church do, while the Eastern rites permit married priests. Whatever Paul is referring to is either yet to manifest, or else could be an indictment against some Essene believers who apparently embraced Christ while repudiating Paul, and perhaps gave birth to the heretical *Ebionites*. (Remember that the Essenes and Pharisees despised each other, so Paul would have had no love for this group to start with.) The Essenes, it will be recalled, discouraged marriage and often practiced vegetarianism. If the warning about meats is not to be understood as criticizing mandatory vegetarianism, it is a warning against mandating some sort of return to kosher eating. Given Paul's continuous opposition to the Judaisers and what we see in much of the Messianic movement of today, the latter is a strong possibility. Finally, it could be a reference to the early form of the Nicolaitans, who started out advocating celibacy and vegetarianism, but who later developed into sexual profligates.

2. Some have misinterpreted these words to mean that Christ has redeemed all men, including those who do *not* believe. Paul's intent is to state that Christ paid for the sins of both Jew and Gentile. Forgiveness, however, is still dependent upon repentance and belief.

3. A reference to the *semikhah*, or "laying on of hands" (Numbers 27:22-23, Heb. 6:2), for ordination.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 5

1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;
 2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.
 3 Honour widows that are widows indeed.¹
 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.
 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.
 6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 5

1 Do not sharply rebuke an older person, but treat him with the respect of a father; and treat the younger men as brothers.
 2 Treat older women as mothers, and treat the younger women with purity, as you would your own sisters.
 3 See to the needs of widows who are truly widows.
 4 But if any widows have children or grandchildren, they should learn how to show reverence and support for their elders at home, something good and acceptable before God.
 5 Now she who is really a widow, without family or resources to see to her own needs [--and thus is worthy of the church's provision--] trusts in God and should continually make prayers and supplications to Him day and night.
 6 But a widow who "does her own thing" is a walking dead

she liveth.

7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.²

10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.³

13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

15 For some are already turned aside after Satan.

16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.⁴

20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

22 Lay hands suddenly on no man,⁵ neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.⁶

24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.

25 Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

person.

7 Teach and proclaim all these things, that they may be blameless.

8 But if anyone does not provide for his own relations, and especially for his own direct family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.

9 Don't consider a widow to be qualified for support unless she is at least sixty years old, and has not been married to more than one man.

10 She should be known for having done good works, and if she has raised [godly] children, lodged strangers, [served the church], aided the less fortunate, and if she has been diligent in good deeds.

11 But the younger widows should not be put on the church welfare roles since they may still have to deal with some natural desires distracting them from Christ, and thus they may want to remarry.

12 This will bring condemnation on them since they will be [abandoning their vow to be consecrated to the work of the church].

13 At the same time, younger widows tend to have too much time on their hands and learn to be idle, wandering from house to house, gossiping and being busybodies, and speaking things they should not.

14 So I prefer that the younger women marry, have children, and run a good household so they don't give the devil occasion to slander Christianity [through others' tongues].

15 For some of these younger women have already turned aside to follow Satan [and his ways].

16 If any man or woman that is a believer in the church has a family member who is a widow, *they* should care for them, that the church is not burdened down with their upkeep, and so see to the needs of true widows.

17 Let the elders who do their jobs well be counted worthy of twice the [financial support] of other people, especially if they focus on [preaching and teaching].

18 Remember what the Scripture says: **Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.** And: **The labourer is worthy of his reward.**

19 Don't listen to an accusation against a church elder unless there are at least two or three witnesses to it. [Which obviously means that their ministry is never to be done in private, but publicly, in view of all.]

20 As for those who are in continuous, unrepentant sin--rebuke them publicly so the congregation will learn the fear of God.

21 I charge you by God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you do these things without showing partiality to anyone.

22 Don't ordain people into leadership who haven't first been tried and tested. Don't partake in other men's sins, but keep yourself pure.

23 [And before I forget--] Don't only drink water any more, but take a little alcoholic wine for your stomach and other problems.

24 [Despite your best efforts, there will always be wolves hiding in the flock, so remember that] some men's sins are clear for all to see [before the Last Judgment]; but some men's sins will never be known in this life, but will follow after them.

25 In the same way, the good deeds of some are known in this life, but even those that are not will be known in the next.

1. "Honour" here, as in the fifth commandment, means to "take care of." It's interesting to note that the church had an early welfare system.

2. Paul seems to be saying here that women who have been married more than once are disqualified from being on the church

welfare roles. His rationale, however, is unclear. He does not restrict this to women divorced and remarried, but appears to include someone whose husband died, and who subsequently remarried.

3. While some believe that Paul had a low opinion of women as a whole, he was still a world ahead of his contemporaries in the way he exalted them as equal heirs of God along with men. He does, however, almost take for granted that younger widows will drift from the faith to become gossips and busybodies. It may well have been in that culture and time the women did have that propensity...unlike today, of course.

4. This command refers back to Deut. 17:6. A point should also be made that incumbent in the command is that an elder's life should be led in such a way that everything he does in the ministry is open to public scrutiny. Paul, for instance, would not have allowed men to counsel women privately, for how would it have been possible for there to be more than one witness to any impropriety?

5. This reiterates the command not to appoint novices to the role of leadership as stated in chapter 3, verse 6.

6. This is license for Timothy to use alcoholic wine for some sort of stomach ailment. (Perhaps gallstones, for alcohol sometimes relaxes the gallbladder when the stones float up and get trapped in the bile duct.)

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 6

1 Let as many servants¹ as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.²

3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 6

1 Let as many slaves who are in that state count their earthly masters worthy of all honor so that the name of God, and His doctrines, are not slandered.

2 And if a slave happens to have a master who is a believer, let him not resent him [for not automatically freeing him, despite being a brother Christian]. Instead, the slave should serve his master well, because [both] are faithful and beloved of God, and the master is blessed by the slave's faithful service. Teach and exhort these things.

3 If any man teaches otherwise [to what I have been saying in this epistle], and does not consent to wholesome teachings, even those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine that develops godliness--

4 He is arrogant, knowing nothing, but instead questioning God's ways in a contentious manner. Out of such attitudes come envy, strife, abuse, evil suspicions, 5 And twisted disputes among men of corrupted minds devoid of truth, who see our faith as a means for material gain. Turn your back on such people.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can take nothing with us when we leave it.

8 In having food and clothing, let us be content.

9 But those who yearn to be rich fall into temptation, and are ensnared by many foolish and harmful ambitions that drown men in destruction and devastation.

10 For the love of money is the cause of all sorts of injurious things that have caused some who've been caught up in it to stray from the faith and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

11 But you, O man of God, flee from these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith and take hold of eternal life to which you have been called and displayed a good testimony of before many witnesses.

13 I commission you in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate,

14 That you keep this command without varying from it, and without reproach, until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Whom God, in His own good time, will reveal is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,

16 Who alone is immortal, dwelling in the light [of God Himself] that no man can approach, Whom no man has ever seen nor can see. To him be honor and might

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;
18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;
19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.
20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:³
21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

everlasting. Amen.

17-19 Instruct those who are rich not to become arrogant, nor to place their trust in their transitory riches, but instead in the living God who richly gives us everything to enjoy. They should be rich in *good deeds*, and ready to share their resources [with the less fortunate], thus storing up a good account for the Age to come, that they may lay hold of true life.

20 O Timothy, keep that which has been placed in your care, avoiding pointless and vain disputes and arguments against the faith based on “science,” falsely so called.

21 Some, you see, professing to be intellectuals, have erred from the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

1. Should be translated: “**Slaves**.”

2. These verses were used in the 1800s to justify slavery. However, since Paul elsewhere lists slave-traders as those denied salvation, there can be no question that he disapproved of it; he merely acknowledged its existence within Roman law, and gave instructions as to how those who did have slaves, or were slaves, should behave: With the same propriety, uprightness, and sober-mindedness that all Christians, regardless of their position in society, were expected to display.

3. How apt are these words today!

1st Peter

1st Peter was written somewhere around 64 AD. Unlike the epistle of 2nd Peter, there is general acceptance that Peter wrote this epistle (though some do question it), but there is little actual proof, other than tradition, that Peter ever went to Rome, from which this epistle is said to have been written. That presumption is based in part on the notion that Peter is using “**Babylon**” as a euphemism for Rome in chapter 5:13, though that can’t that be known with certainty. Some believe that he was writing from the province of Babylon and not the city, which by then had ceased to exist. However, we note that the subjects of this epistle are all located in the regions of Turkey and the Balkans, which militates against that theory since there is no mention of any cities of the Middle East. The author clearly meant to address Western churches much closer to Rome than Babylon.

This epistle contains some of the hardest commands in the New Testament, urging Christians to patiently serve even despotic leaders, and to hold their peace even when unfairly treated.

1st PETER CHAPTER 1

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers.¹ scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,
2 Elect according to the foreknowledge² of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith³ unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:⁴
7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:
8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:
9 Receiving the end of your faith,⁵ even the salvation of your souls.
10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:
11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ⁶ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.
12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.⁷
13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be

1st PETER CHAPTER 1

1 **P**eter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the Gentile “Strangers among us,” scattered throughout Pontus [northeast Turkey], Galatia [north central Turkey], Cappadocia [central Turkey], Asia [western Turkey], and Bithynia [northwest Turkey],
2 Who were chosen through the foreknowledge of God the Father to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, that they may be obedient and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. May ever-increasing grace and peace be with you.
3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, in his abundant mercy, has given a second birth to us, that we may have a living hope--because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead--of receiving an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that will never fade away. This inheritance is reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through your faith until the salvation that will be revealed at the end of time.
6 You greatly rejoice in this knowledge even though, if it’s necessary, for a time you are downtrodden because of many persecutions.
7 Know that the testing of your faith--something more precious than gold which perishes--even though it is tested in the fire [of affliction], will ultimately be to your praise, honor, and glory when the earth sees the return of Jesus Christ,
8 Who, though never having seen, you love--and in whom you believe, though you don’t see him yet--and in whom you rejoice with unspeakable joy that is full of glory,
9 Until you obtain the final goal of your faith: the salvation of your souls.
10-11 This salvation the prophets, who diligently searched out and foretold the grace that would be manifested and come to you, greatly desired to know more of. For they sought to learn both what their prophecies meant, and when they would come to pass, when the Spirit of Christ within them testified beforehand about the sufferings of the Messiah and the glory that would follow those sufferings.
12 They understood that these prophecies they were giving were not for them, in their time--but for us, in our time. And these things, which even the angels desire to know more about, have been passed on to you by those who have preached the Gospel in the Holy Spirit, who was sent down

sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
 14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:
 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;⁸
 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.
 17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:
 18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation⁸ received by tradition from your fathers;
 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:
 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,
 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.
 22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.⁹
 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.
 24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:
 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

from heaven.

13 Therefore, discipline your thought life and be sober-minded, remaining confident to the end because of the grace that will be extended to you at the revealing of Jesus Christ [to the world at his return].

14 Be like obedient children, not letting your character and actions be molded by the former lifestyle and urges you knew when you were ignorant of God.

15 Instead, conform your lifestyles into an image of holiness, for He who called you is holy.

16 As it is written: **Be ye holy; for I am holy.**

17 And if you are among those who call upon the Father, who--without respect of persons--impartially judges every person's deeds, live out your life here on earth with sober fear.

18 For keep in mind that you were not ransomed out of the futility of the godless lifestyles you inherited from your ancestors with corruptible things like silver and gold.

19 You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, who was like a [sacrificial] lamb without blemish or spot.

20-21 He truly was appointed to this task from before the world came into being, but only in these last days was made manifest for you who through him believe in God, who raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, so that you might have the same faith and hope in God as well.

22 Since you have purified your inner man, obeying the truth through the Spirit and sincerely loving your brethren, see to it that you perfect that love by fervently loving each other with a pure heart,

23 Being born again, not through corruptible *human* sperm, but through incorruptible, that being the decree of God, which lives and abides forever.

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this decree is the Message that has been preached to you in the Gospel.

1. "Strangers" is the Hebrew term referring to Gentiles who have joined themselves to the commonwealth of Israel.

2. A reaffirmation that the Gentiles were not merely allowed to come to God as an afterthought, but that God, from the beginning, had in mind all of humanity being His people.

3. Some skeptics like to claim there is a disagreement between Paul and the other apostles regarding what Christianity actually is. Jewish skeptics in particular like to point to Jesus' affirmation of keeping the Torah, and Paul's de-emphasis of that, inventing a non-existent disagreement. We see here Peter also understood that salvation was both gained--and "kept"--through faith, and not, as some traditional beliefs hold, through the Sacraments.

4. "Temptations" should be understood as "persecutions." It is at the time this epistle was written that Nero turned against the Christians and began a horrid persecution of them after the burning of Rome. This persecution extended beyond the borders of Rome, but true empire-wide persecution of Christians did not occur until Decius and Diocletian in the 3rd century.

5. "The end of your faith" is better understood as: "The goal of your faith." This is a verse used by Catholics to promote the idea of progressive justification since it can be inferred that Peter is claiming salvation is a future event. However, when weighed against the totality of Scripture, that view does not hold up in the sense of confirming that one's eternal destiny remains in question until he dies and then finds out whether or not he died in a state of grace.

6. "Spirit of Christ" could certainly refer to the Holy Spirit. However, the context seems to suggest that "spirit" should be understood as "revelation," which is acceptable in Eastern speech--especially since Peter, in the next verse, otherwise inexplicably shifts from the term "Spirit of Christ" to the "Holy Ghost."

7. Jewish tradition has a lot of weird stories about the relationship between God and His angels. In some cases, they cause God frustration and almost relate to Him as if near-equals. Just how much of this Jewish notion of the angels' relationship to God is coloring Peter's comments we don't know. At minimum, his words reveal that the angels are curious about what God is doing, and don't understand it--much like us.

8. "Conversation" means "lifestyle."

9. As noted by Jesus in the Gospels, one of the key indicators on whether one is or is not a member of the Body of Christ is his love for his fellow brethren.

1st PETER CHAPTER 2

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,
 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word¹, that ye may grow thereby:
 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.
 4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,
 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.
 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.
 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient², the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,
 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.
 9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:
 10 Which in time past were not a people,³ but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.
 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;
 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.
 13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man⁴ for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;
 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.
 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:
 16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.
 17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.⁵
 18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.
 19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.
 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.
 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:
 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

1st PETER CHAPTER 2

1 And so, laying aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and backbiting,
 2-4 Desire the sincere milk of the Gospel message as [innocent] newborn babes, that you may be nourished by it and grow up to maturity--if you have indeed *tasted and found that the Lord is gracious*, to whom you come, as if to a living foundation stone rejected by men but chosen by God, and considered precious to Him.
 5 You also, as living building bricks, are being built up into a spiritual temple and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.
 6 For the Scripture also says: **Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.**
 7 To *you* who believe, he is indeed precious. But to those who refuse to believe, **the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.** Yes, this is the fate of those who stumble at the Message, refusing to believe, which was a fate appointed them.
 9 But you are *a chosen race, a confraternity of priest-kings, a holy nation, and a precious people*--so that you may declare praise to Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.
 10 In time past, you were not His people and had not obtained mercy, but now you *are* His people and *have* obtained mercy!
 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as **strangers and pilgrims**, to abstain from fleshly desires that war against your soul.
 12 Have an upright lifestyle among the pagans, so that--even though they may talk about you as evildoers--they may, by seeing your good deeds, [come to the faith and] glorify God on the day of visitation.
 13 Obey every governmental institution for the sake of the Lord, whether it is to the Emperor as supreme,
 14 Or various lesser governors that are sent out by him to punish evildoers, and to praise those who do well.
 15 For this is the will of God, that by your doing good, you may silence the tongues of ignorant, foolish men.
 16 Do this as men who, though they are free, do not use their freedom as a justification for wrongdoing, but instead use their freedom to serve God.
 17 Respect all men. Love the brothers in the Messianic community. Fear God. Honor the Emperor.
 18 Slaves, be obedient to your masters with all fear--not only if your master is good and gentle, but even if he is a hard taskmaster.
 19 For it is praiseworthy if a man, for the sake of his conscience toward God, endures hardship, suffering undeservedly.
 20 For what credit is there if someone strikes you for something wrong that you do, and you take it patiently? But if you suffer for doing what is right, and endure *that* with patience--well, this is pleasing to God.
 21 For you have been called to act in such a manner because Christ also suffered patiently for us, leaving for us an example that we should follow in his footsteps.
 22 **Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.**
 23 And when he was reviled, he did not speak back in return; and when he suffered, he did not make threats to

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.⁶
 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.
 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

his abusers—but instead, he committed himself to God who judges righteously.
 24 It was he who, in his own body, bore our sins on the “tree,” so we, being dead to sin, should be made alive to righteousness; and it was *by his stripes that you all were healed*.
 25 For you were *like sheep going astray*, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

1. In English, this looks as if Peter is telling the people to go read their Bibles so that they can grow spiritually. He is actually exhorting them to listen to sound foundational teaching from their leaders, and to put those teachings into practice in their everyday lives.
2. “**Disobedient**” is the wrong translation. The word refers to those who are “**unbelieving**,” and the passage should not be understood as referring to disobedient sinners, but those who refuse to believe the Gospel—especially the unbelieving Jews. Peter goes on to point out that just as Christ was an offense to the unbelieving Jewish leaders, so too the Christians are a thorn in their side and subject to persecution from them.
3. A clear reference to Gentile believers who formerly were not part of the commonwealth of Israel.
4. Though “**every ordinance of man**” sounds like it means the various civil laws each country enacts, it is referring to civil institutions and authorities.
5. These exhortations to honor the king and obey civil authority have been very controversial, for absolute obedience to them would call into question things like the American Revolution or any civil revolt against despotic leadership.
6. In other words, Peter has been exhorting Christians to keep their mouths shut when they’re unfairly treated, and to leave it to God to vindicate them.

1st PETER CHAPTER 3

1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;¹
 2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.
 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;²
 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.
 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:
 6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord³: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement⁴.
 7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.⁵
 8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful⁶, be courteous:
 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.
 10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:
 11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.
 12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.
 13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be

1st PETER CHAPTER 3

1-4 Likewise, wives, be in subjection to your husbands, so that if any [husbands] do not obey the Gospel, they may—independent of the Gospel—be won over by their wives as they behold their pure and reverential lifestyle reflecting the fact that their adornment and identity come not by outward things like hair styles, expensive jewelry, and designer clothes, but in the hidden treasure of the heart, which is an adornment that is incorruptible: A meek and quiet spirit, something that in God’s eyes is of great value.
 5 For this is how the holy women of olden times who trusted in God adorned themselves, treating their own husbands with absolute respect and honor—
 6 Just as Sarah, for instance, obeyed Abraham, calling him “Lord.” You are daughters of hers so long as you do well, and do not let fear overcome you.
 7 In the same way, husbands, take care of your wives in an understanding manner, honoring her as a weaker vessel but still an equal heir of the grace of [eternal] life [in Christ], so that God can respect and answer your prayers.
 8 Finally, you all should have the same mindset of compassion for one another. Love each other as brothers, and be quick to show compassion and courtesy,
 9 Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult—but instead blessing, knowing this is what you have been called to do so that you, yourself, can inherit a blessing.
 10 For: **He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:**
 11 **Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.**
 12 **For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.**
 13 And who would harm you if you pursue doing good things?
 14 But if it so be that you suffer for doing the right thing—be happy! **Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.**

followers of that which is good?

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;⁷

20 Which sometime were disobedient,⁸ when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us⁹ (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready, in meekness and respect, to give a good answer to every man who asks you why you have such confidence,

16 Having a clear conscience [when you reply], so that, whereas they may speak of you as if you are an evildoer, these same people who falsely accuse you may be ashamed by your Christlike lifestyle.

17 For it is better to suffer for doing good than it is to suffer for doing evil, if indeed God wills for you to suffer.

18-20 For Christ also suffered one time for man's sins--the just, suffering for the unjust--that he might bring us to God by dying in the flesh but arising to life in his spirit, through which he went and proclaimed things to those spirits in Hades who, in time past, refused to believe when long ago the patience of God was being extended to *them* in the days Noah was building the ark, in which only a few, eight souls, to be exact [who *did* have faith], were saved through the water.

21 This symbolizes the sort of baptism that now saves us--not simply putting away the dirt of the flesh, but instead asking God for a good [and clear] conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

22 Who has gone into heaven, and is now on the right hand of God, with angels, various [earthly and spiritual] authorities and powers being made subject to him.

1. Peter is saying that if a wife shows herself to be an exemplary homemaker, who doesn't talk back to her spouse, the husband may be so shocked by what he sees that he may show interest in the Gospel and eventually come to believe in Christ.

2. This is not a command to wear a skirt down to the floor, or to throw away the lipstick--but it is an exhortation for the women to set their priorities on spiritual things.

3. "Master" is an even better translation.

4. In old English, it means "terror" or "fear," not "a sense of wonderment" as it does today. Peter is telling the wives not to be worried and stressed over natural things.

5. "According to knowledge" is a confusing phrase, and the following paraphrase may help to convey the meaning of the text a bit better: "In the same way, husbands, take care of your wives in an understanding manner, honoring her as a weaker vessel but still an equal heir in Christ, so that God can respect and answer your prayers."

6. "Pitiful" means willing to show compassion and pity toward others.

7. "Preached" doesn't mean Jesus went into *Sheol* and spoke the Gospel to the unsaved who died in early times as a second chance of repentance. It means that Jesus went and proclaimed victory to the righteous dead in "Abraham's Bosom," while announcing defeat to the unrighteous. What we're not told is why Jesus seems to single out the dead of Noah's time for this message. Some theologians suggest the passage should be understood as saying that Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, preached to the antediluvian world through Noah in *his* time, but the text does not really lend itself well to that notion.

8. This is one of the worst of the badly-translated verses in the New Testament, which helps muddy an already difficult-to-understand verse about whether or not baptism saves the soul. It also dilutes the evil of those being spoken of, making it seem as if they weren't all that bad, which gives birth to the false teaching that Jesus went to Hades/*Sheol* and preached a second chance for salvation to 'sometimes disobedient' people. Actually, "sometime were disobedient" can, and should be, translated as: "In time past, refused to believe." When we translate it correctly, the text is strengthened in promoting the overall concept that salvation comes only through faith.

Yet another issue that arises with the false doctrine of Noah's generation having the Gospel "preached" to them in Hades, is that of any "good" people who died after the Flood, but before Christ: Peter's words would exclude *them* from this benefit, and we must ask why the wholly wicked generation of Noah would hear the Gospel, while hosts after them, who were not as wicked, did not receive the same benefit. The answer, of course, is that the wicked dead did not get the Gospel "preached" to them at all, but merely had their ultimate defeat proclaimed to them, while the righteous were told of Christ's ultimate victory over Satan and death.

9. A verse often misunderstood and misused from ancient times to today. The wording makes it sound as if Peter might be suggesting that undergoing baptism is a salvific experience, or that baptism accomplishes some sort of forgiveness of sin. This is why the Catholic Church believes that baptism washes away the stain of Original Sin (handed down to their descendants by Adam and Eve), and why some denominations believe a person is not saved until they undergo baptism.

But this is the same Peter who, in Acts 10:43, said: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Peter, like Paul, understood that salvation was through faith, and forgiveness of sin was on the basis of faith in Messiah's atonement, and not through some mixture of faith + receiving baptism.

Peter may actually have understood baptism somewhat metaphysically as Paul did; and to place Peter's words here in correct context, we need to reference 1 Cor. 10:1-2, to see how Paul touches on the symbolism of baptism:

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;"

Paul is outlining the metaphysical notion that the Israelites were **"baptized unto Moses"** in the sense of coming under the spiritual covering and covenant of Moses (the Law), symbolized by the "baptism" of passing through the Red Sea and the cloud that covered the camp. (However, the point must be made that there was no righteousness or efficacious effect by this "baptism.")

We note also that Peter, in verse 20, just likened Christ to the ark prepared by Noah to save the human race, and *this* is the vehicle by which Peter understands that salvation and the forgiveness of sin have occurred. (**"By water"** in the verse can, and should be, translated **"through water,"** as virtually all modern Bibles other than the KJV render it.) The baptism subsequent to that is a sign that the people have now been baptized into Christ, again coming under a spiritual covering and covenant.

Peter thus is not saying that water baptism saves (in the sense of salvation from sin) any more than he is saying the waters of the flood "saved" Noah. His point is that the *ark* (see Heb. 11:7) saved the people through God's judgment of the flood just as Christ now saves *us* from the future wrath of fire that will come upon the earth (2nd Peter 3:7)! In fact, this very verse, in which some mistakenly believe Peter is teaching that water baptism saves, actually denies that very thing when it says, **"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,* but the answer of a good conscience toward God."**

* The verse shows a distinction between what water does when the body is immersed in it, and what is accomplished on a spiritual level through faith in Christ.

1st PETER CHAPTER 4

1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us [and our sins] in his body, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.¹

3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.²

7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.³

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.⁴

11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.⁵

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of,

1st PETER CHAPTER 4

1 So as Christ has suffered for us [and our sins] in his body, arm yourselves with the same willing attitude--for a person who has suffered in his body has broken with sin,

2 So that he should no longer live out his earthly days following the ungodly urges of humanity, but instead following the will of God.

3 For [you] spent enough time in your past, acting like pagans when you participated in lasciviousness, lusts, drunkenness, partying, carousing, and unrestrained idolatry.

4 Your old friends think it strange that you no longer run to fellowship with them in these outrageous things, and thus they speak badly about you.

5 But these shall one day give an account to [Christ], who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6 This is why the Gospel was preached to some who have passed on, that they [through their testimony] might be judged by earthly rulers [and be slain in the flesh] only to live through God in the spirit.

7 But the end of all things is at hand. So be sober-minded and vigilant in your prayers.

8 And above all things, have a fervent love amongst you, for love covers a multitude of sins.

9 Show hospitality to the homeless in the Messianic community without being resentful for the intrusion.

10 And in proportion as anyone has received a gift from the Spirit, so you should minister your gifts between each other as good stewards of the manifold grace God has given you.

11 If any man has a message to proclaim, let it reflect the words and wisdom of God. If any man serves, let him do it as God has given him the ability to, that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12 Beloved, don't think it strange--as if something unnatural has come upon you--regarding the fiery trial that you may be undergoing.

13 But rejoice [in such trials], for you are sharers of the sufferings of Christ in order that, when his glory is revealed [at the Second Coming], you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

14 If you are mocked and persecuted for being a Christian, happy are you--for *the Spirit of glory and [power] rests upon you*. On the part of those condemning you, he is spoken evil of, but on your part he is glorified.

but on your part he is glorified.
 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.
 16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.
 17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?
 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?⁶
 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.⁷

15 But let none of you suffer for being a murderer, thief, evildoer, or for being a busybody in other people's business.
 16 But if any man suffers for being a Christian, let him not be ashamed. Instead, let him glorify God for being associated with Christ and his name.
 17 For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God--and if it begins first with us, what will the fate be of those who refuse to [believe and] obey the Gospel of God?
 18 **And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?**
 19 Therefore, let those who suffer because God wills for it to happen, commit their souls into His keeping by continuing to do well, for He is a faithful Creator.

1. As Paul makes clear elsewhere, there are times that to do what is right and resist what is wrong is a frustrating struggle.

2. This verse causes some problems in that some try to tie it into the last chapter, deriving the notion that Peter taught the dead in *Sheol* had a second chance for repentance after the Crucifixion. Because of other verses in the Bible that make clear that it is appointed to men to die one time and then face judgment, we know this cannot be true.

So to what is Peter referring?

Well, we see from the same verse that the "dead" of whom he speaks were "judged according to men in the flesh." This means that they were mocked and rejected--just as the Christians he was writing to were mocked and rejected--by unbelievers. Certainly, this cannot be the case for dead spirits eager to avoid hell. Thus, he must be speaking either of the righteous in Old Testament times, or possibly of the Christians in his own era who were being martyred for their faith, especially as we see him begin to deal with this as he goes on in the chapter. In either event, those referred to seem to have known and embraced the Gospel before death.

3. Peter is no more suggesting that through charity (shown by good deeds and alms) a man can receive true forgiveness of his sins, any more than he can through baptism. But he *is* indicating that God is less likely to hold our temporal sins against us when we our attitude is otherwise right.

4. "The gift" is a misleading translation. The verse might be better understood as: "*In proportion as anyone has received a gift from the Spirit...*" Otherwise, it is referring to real-world talents that can benefit the church.

5. The gist of this verse is to exhort people to minister under the anointing and submission to the Spirit, rather than carnal talent.

6. A sobering verse that calls to mind the fact that even the most righteous of us is an abomination to God apart from Christ. It must also be noted that "saved" is not talking about salvation from sin, but salvation from the upcoming Great Tribulation. This is discussed briefly in Appendix 5.

7. Another verse showing--to our displeasure--that it can indeed be God's will for us to suffer. Despite that, our attitude is to trust God to the end. It's this fact that causes many to fall away, because the devil is quick to bring doubt to someone who undergoes what seems to be an unfair persecution or trial. Yet this is an absolute fact of the Christian life: There will be times and seasons when a believer will go through something unfair that God simply will not lift, leaving the person to go through it to the end, whether it takes weeks, months, years, decades, or an entire lifetime.

1st PETER CHAPTER 5

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:
 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.¹
 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.
 5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.²
 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:
 7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.
 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
 9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren

1st PETER CHAPTER 5

1-2 I, who am an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, along with being one who will share the glory that will be revealed, exhort my fellow elders among you to feed the flock of God, overseeing that flock not out of obligation, but willingly; and not for ill-gotten gain, but instead because they *want* to do it!
 3 Also, do not lord it over God's heritage, but be good examples to the flock.
 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a glorious crown that will not fade away.
 5 Likewise, you young people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you should learn how to serve one another and be clothed in humility, for: **God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.**
 6-7 So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, casting all your cares upon Him--because He cares about you--so that He may exalt you in due time.
 8 Be sober-minded, and vigilant, for your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whomever he can gulp down.
 9 Resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same trials are also happening to your brethren elsewhere in the world.

that are in the world.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

12 By Silvanus³, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.⁴

14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

10 But may the God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus—after you have suffered for a while—perfect, ground, strengthen, and settle you.

11 To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12 Through Silas, whom I know to be a faithful brother to you, I have written this short letter, encouraging, proclaiming, and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you should stand.

13 The church at “Babylon,” elect with yourselves, sends greetings, as does Mark, my son.

14 Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be with you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

1. An excellent exhortation to ministers never to lord it over the congregation, for their charge is to serve, not to *be* served!

2. The point of all this talk of submission is not necessarily to command everyone to blindly obey orders, but to function as a harmonious body which places the good of others above self. In such a milieu, submission comes naturally, as a point of serving, rather than artificially through carnal obedience to orders because one “has” to.

3. Otherwise known as Silas in the book of Acts.

4. “**Church**” isn’t in the text, but rather “**she**” is, and this is taken to *mean* the church. As to what “**Babylon**” refers to, most presume it is a euphemism for Rome. Also, Marcus is another name for the Gospel-writer Mark.

Titus

This letter to Titus was written around 65 AD from Nicopolis (in southern Greece), which coincidentally was known for its athletic events, something Paul's writings show the apostle was passionate for. Titus would leave Crete to oversee the church in Dalmatia (Yugoslavia), but tradition claims he returned to Crete as bishop, serving in that office until his death as an old man. The epistle to him provides practical outlines for the structure of the church and its elders.

TITUS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;
2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;
3 But hath in due times manifested his word¹ through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;
4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.
5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:
6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife,² having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.
7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine,³ no striker,⁴ not given to filthy lucre;⁵
8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;
9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.⁶
10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:
11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.
12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.⁷
13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;
14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.
15 Unto the pure all things are pure:⁸ but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.⁹
16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

TITUS CHAPTER 1

1 **P**aul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to bring God's elect to faith and acknowledgment of the truth that leads to, and illustrates, godliness,
2 In confidence of eternal life that God, the unlying, promised before the world began,
3 But has, in due time, manifested His declaration through preaching, a task I am appointed to through the command of God our Savior.
4 To Titus, my own son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.
5 I left you in Crete so you could finish what we had started, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed you to do. [To aid you in fulfilling this commission, I advise you as follows:]
6 A qualified candidate should be of sterling reputation, a [non-polygamist], with faithful children who behave well, rather than being accused of riotous or rebellious living.
7 For a bishop must be upright, as the steward of God, and not self-centered, nor hot-tempered, nor given to drinking, nor a hothead always ready to fight, nor the sort who makes money unjustly.
8 He must love to show hospitality. He must love goodness. He must be sober-minded, fair, holy, and even-tempered,
9 Holding fast the faithful Message as he has been taught, so that he, through sound doctrine, can exhort and convince criticizing unbelievers to accept the Gospel.
10 [Seek for men like this,] for there are many insubordinate, vain-talking deceivers, especially among those from a background mandating circumcision and Torah observance.
11 The mouths of these people must be silenced, for they subvert whole [groups of believers], teaching things they should not--and all for the sake of ill-gotten gain.
12 In fact, Epimenides--himself, a Cretan orator--once made the point: "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons."
13 I couldn't have said it better myself! So rebuke those [preaching circumcision and Torah observance] sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,
14 Instead of giving in to Jewish fables and extra-biblical commandments of men who turn away from the truth [of salvation by grace, through faith in Christ].
15 "To those who are pure, all things are pure," but those who are [spiritually] defiled in their unbelief can be pure in nothing, for their mind and conscience is defiled.
16 They claim to know God, but prove they don't by their deeds, being abominable, disobedient, and useless in so far as doing anything good goes.

1. “**Word**,” refers to the Decree of God, not the Scriptures.
2. Meaning a non-polygamist.
3. This is not a prohibition against the imbibing of alcohol; Paul is merely stating that elders should not be those whose intake of alcohol exceeds that which is customary in society.
4. A “**striker**” is a hothead who’s always ready for a fistfight.
5. Meaning someone who is greedy or covetous.
6. A “**gainsayer**” is someone who speaks against the faith.
7. The quote is from the 6th century BC Cretan poet Epimenides, referred to as a “**prophet**” because poets in that era were thought to speak under inspiration of the gods. Otherwise, the point is controversial in that it could be viewed as a bigoted denunciation of the entire population of Crete. Paul’s remarks, however, would absolutely have been in keeping with the way everyone viewed the Cretans, for they had an extremely bad reputation even within their own Empire.
8. This was a proverb of the time.
9. Paul’s point here is that the mind that does not bring itself into subjection to God’s way will always have a perverted outlook. The only cure is repentance and regeneration.

TITUS CHAPTER 2

1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:
 2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.
 3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;
 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,
 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God¹ be not blasphemed.
 6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.
 7 In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,
 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.
 9 Exhort servants² to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again;³
 10 Not purloining,⁴ but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.
 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,
 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;⁵
 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar⁶ people, zealous of good works.
 15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

TITUS CHAPTER 2

1 But you--speak things which promote sound doctrine:
 2 That the aged men be sober-minded, dignified, even-tempered, sound in faith, love, and patience.
 3-5 That the older women should likewise display behavior consistent with holiness: Not false accusers, not given to too much wine; and teachers of good things--so they can teach the young women to be sober-minded, to love their husbands and children, and to be discreet, chaste, good housekeepers, and good and obedient to their husbands so that the Message of God is not spoken of in a blasphemous manner [by outsiders].
 6 Young men should likewise be exhorted to be sober-minded.
 7-8 You, yourself, need to show a pattern of good works by showing incorruptibility in your teaching; and serious, sincere, sound speech that no one can find fault with. Do this so that he who is against the Gospel will be put to shame for having nothing bad to say about you.
 9 Exhort slaves to be obedient to their masters, and to perform all their tasks in a way that will please them, instead of back-talking.
 10 They should not steal, but should show themselves good and faithful, so that in all things they can be a shining example of the doctrine of God our Savior.
 11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,
 12 Teaching us that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,
 13 As we fervently await the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,
 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for himself a particularly prized people who are zealous to do good works.
 15 Speak words like this, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Tolerate no disrespect from any man [in the church there].

1. Again, “**Word of God**” means the proclamation of God’s message to mankind, not “the Scriptures.”

2. Should be translated: “**Slaves**.”

3. “**Not answering again**” means “Not talking back.”

4. “**Not purloining**” means “Not stealing.”

5. This verse is controversial, for those who believe Christ is God punctuate it differently than those who don’t, giving radically different meanings to it. Orthodox Christianity sees the verse as saying ‘Jesus Christ is our great God and savior,’ while others see it as saying, ‘Our great God, and in addition our savior, Jesus Christ,’ claiming the verse is talking about the Father and Son, rather than the Son alone. While it can be read that way, the most natural reading is the traditional one.

6. “**Peculiar**” is an archaic word that in its time meant “something belonging to someone,” rather than “weird.”

TITUS CHAPTER 3

1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers,¹ to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,
 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.
 3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.
 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,
 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;²
 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.
 9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.³
 10 A man that is an heretick⁴ after the first and second admonition reject;
 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.
 12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.
 13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.
 14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.
 15 All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

TITUS CHAPTER 3

1 Instruct the believers to be in subjection to the governmental princes and authorities, to obey local magistrates, and be ready to perform every good work.
 2 Tell them not to speak evil of any man, and instruct them not to be brawlers, but instead to be gentle, showing meekness to all men.
 3 For we, ourselves, also were once foolish, disobedient, and deceived, giving in to different ungodly lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hateful, and hating one another.
 4-7 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared [in the person of Jesus], He saved us not because of our righteous deeds, but because of His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal through the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, being justified by His grace, we should all be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
 8 What I have just said is something you can place your faith in. And I wish you to affirm these teachings constantly, that those who have believed in God might be careful to pursue doing good deeds, for such deeds are good and profitable to men.
 9 But avoid foolish questions, [Jewish] genealogies, and arguments and disputes about the Torah, for they are unprofitable and vain.
 10. A man trying to bring sectarian division between Gentiles and Jews in the church should be warned once or twice. After that, have nothing more to do with him [and expel him from fellowship].
 11 You can know that such a man is perverted and sinning, and is self-condemned for that.
 12 When Artemas or Tychicus arrives there, make haste to come unto me at Nicopolis, for I have determined to winter there.
 13 Speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and make sure they have all they need.
 14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works for those in dire need, so their lives show good fruit.
 15 All that are with me send greetings. Greet those in the faith who love us. Grace be with you all. Amen.

1. Although the same terms are used in Ephesians regarding spiritual entities, Paul refers here to the Roman governing authorities.

2. This is a very important verse that illustrates the act of salvation is not, as some believe, based on some muddy combination of man's faith measured against the deeds he does to see if he has truly believed and been found worthy of eternal life—but through the regeneration of the Spirit that can come only by faith (though some would appeal to this verse to show this regeneration comes through Baptism).

3. Another instance where Paul wants the Gentiles to get their minds off the Torah and arguing about whether or how one should keep it.

4. A "heretic" refers here to someone bringing division between Gentiles and Jews, more than simply a person with bad theology.

JUDE

Jude was written somewhere around 65-75 AD by the brother of James. Interestingly, the author makes the point of acknowledging he is the brother of James, but does not mention Jesus. This may be a point of humility or, more likely, an acknowledgment that both men were cousins of Christ, rather than actual siblings. (Many believe that Jude was the son of Cleopas.) The theme of the book is to exhort believers to contend for the faith and reject the false teachers Jude promises will be judged just as the ‘angels’ who fell in the early years of Genesis were judged.

Jude’s repeated use of non-canonical writings in his Epistle is also ironic given the fact that anti-Catholic theologians have traditionally appealed to the New Testament’s (supposed) lack of citation of the apocrypha to prove them unworthy of being in the canon of Scripture. Yet Jude cites from the *Book of Enoch* and the *Assumption of Moses*, two works of antiquity respected by the early church but universally rejected as inerrant Scripture. For this reason Jude was not fully accepted as canonical until later centuries of the church.

The striking similarity between Jude and 2nd Peter has always been noted, and a debate has raged over which book came first, or whether 2nd Peter was artificially derived from Jude’s Epistle. Jude may actually predate 2nd Peter because 2nd Peter appears to expand in chapter 1:12 over what Jude 1:10 states. Other theologians believe Jude was written after 2nd Peter because of a quote in verses 17-18 from 2nd Peter 3:3. For these reasons we cannot be sure just when it was written or if it was written before or after Peter’s death.

The first actual acknowledgment of Jude’s Epistle is around 180 AD. Jude is believed to have ministered throughout the Middle East until being martyred in Persia.

JUDE CHAPTER 1

1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified¹ by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:
2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.
3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.
4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.²
5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.
6 And the angels which kept not their first estate³, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.⁴
7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner,⁵ giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.
8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the

JUDE CHAPTER 1

1 ude, the slave of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are [beloved] by God the Father, and called and preserved for Jesus Christ.
2 Mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you all.
3 Beloved: Though I had planned on writing [a positive letter] about the salvation we all share, it has instead become necessary for me to write and exhort you to earnestly hold to, and fight for, the Christian faith that was originally delivered to the righteous.
4 For there are certain ungodly men that have slithered their way into your fold who, from olden times, have been written about, foretelling their condemnation for denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ by perverting and substituting the truth of God’s Gospel of grace into a lie giving license to commit sexual sin and debauchery.
5 I thus want to bring to your remembrance—even though you have heard this before—how the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed the ones who refused to believe [what He had said].
6 And the angels, who went beyond their permitted authority, and left their original sphere of habitation [to breed with humans], God has also reserved in everlasting chains in the darkness of Tartarus until the [Last Judgment],
7 Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them that in like manner gave themselves over to sexual licentiousness, and engaged in forbidden sexual practices, are presented as an example to us—for *they* suffer the vengeance of everlasting fire.
8 In the same way, these filthy dreamers defile their bodies,

flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.
 9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses,⁶ durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

12 These are spots⁷ in your feasts of charity⁸, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars⁹, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam¹⁰, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.¹¹

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These be they who separate themselves,¹² sensual, having not the Spirit.

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,¹³

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:¹⁴

23 And others save with fear¹⁵, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

reject correction, and speak evil of [heavenly] authorities.

9 Yet even Michael the archangel, when disputing over the body of Moses with the devil, didn't presume to denounce him, but simply said: "The Lord rebuke you!"

10 But these people speak evil about things they don't understand, and what they do understand comes from mere instinct, like brute beasts; and in those things [they believe], they corrupt themselves.

11 Woe to them, for they have gone the same bad way as Cain did [being faithless murderers whom God has rejected]; and they greedily ran down the same road as Balaam [selling out for money]; and, like Korah, they will be swallowed up for rebelling against authority.

12 These people are like reefs in front of a ship when they come to eat without fear [of God] at your gatherings for worship and fellowship. They are waterless clouds, blown about by the wind...they are autumn trees with either withered fruit, or no fruit at all--utterly dead, and plucked up by the roots.

13 They are raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. They are "wandering stars," banished to the blackest darkness forever.

14 Enoch, the seventh [generation] from Adam prophesied about them, saying: **Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,**

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

16 These are grumbling complainers who walk after their own [perverted] lusts. Their mouths are always ready to flatter and boast in order to take advantage of people.

17 But, beloved, remember the words which the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ spoke before.

18 They told you there would be mockers in the last days who would walk after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These people are those who cause dissension. They are carnal, and devoid of the Holy Spirit.

20-21 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in the most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will give you eternal life.

22-23 And have compassion on those whose faith is weak. Others save, pulling them out of the fire. Continue showing mercy [to those who have heard and rejected the Gospel, while hating and keeping yourself from their unrighteousness].

22-23 [*Alternate reading*]: Stand against those criticizing the faith. Others save, pulling them out of the fire. Show mercy [to those who have heard and rejected the Gospel, while hating and keeping yourself from their unrighteousness].

24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you in perfection before the presence of His glory with tremendous joy,

25 To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

1. Only in later centuries does the word "sanctified" appear. Manuscripts before the 9th century have the word "beloved" in its place.

2. It is noteworthy that Jude, in addition to Peter and Paul, faced the problem of false teachers who were perverting the Gospel of Grace into a license for sin.

3. It is here that Jude begins to deal with the metaphorical. The "angels" he speaks of are those who coupled with human women in

Genesis 6, a universal belief within Christianity and Judaism until the time of Augustine when Christian revisionists, adopting a theory by Julius Africanus (who picked it up from the Jews) created to placate critics of Christianity, abandoned traditional thinking to embrace the false “Godly line of Seth” notion. Note also that these beings are indicated to have willingly left their place of habitation, rather than being expelled by God as happened with Satan and his angels, suggesting an additional rebellion to Satan’s, or that they were some sort of spirits or creatures from the terrestrial universe. (The word “**estate**” refers to the boundaries of authority these angels--or whatever they were--had, while the word “**habitation**” can be understood as, “**principality**,” or “**domain**,” although the only other place it is used is in 2 Cor. 5:2, where it refers to the our spiritual bodies after the resurrection, and could refer to taking human form to breed with humans!)

4. The latter half of the verse refers to the tradition that these fallen angels were bound in Tartarus for 70 generations, at which time their judgment would occur (also see Matt. 8:29). As the Book of Enoch states:

To Michael likewise the Lord said, Go and announce his crime to Samyaza, and to the others who are with him, who have been associated with women, that they might be polluted with all their impurity. And when all their sons shall be slain, when they shall see the perdition of their beloved, bind them for seventy generations underneath the earth, even to the day of judgment, and of consummation, until the judgment, the effect of which will last forever, be completed.
--1 Enoch 10:15.

Interestingly, the demon Azazel, mentioned in the Book of Enoch as one of the leaders of the angels in the Genesis 6 incident, is also mentioned in Lev. 16 in connection with the *Yom Kippur* sacrifice. The sins of the people would be conferred upon the goat for Azazel (the Scapegoat), and this goat would be taken into the wilderness a few miles southeast of Jerusalem and cast off the cliff of Haradan into an abyss, at the bottom of which Azazel was believed to be imprisoned. (The Bible does not mention this, but this was what the Jews did with the goat.) There is an obvious parallel between the goat’s being cast into an abyss, and Azazel and his angels being judged and cast into the depths of Tartarus.

The Augustinian, of course, must take the view this reference to Azazel is actually a reference to Satan. If so, we have a problem: Satan and his angels are not locked up in Tartarus! Satan and his angels were alive and active in the time of Christ, and still are today!* Yet Peter specifically (2nd Peter 2:4) states that at least one group of angelic beings have *literally* been cast down to Tartarus and bound in chains until the Last Judgment. So if Satan and his angels are not currently bound in Tartarus—who is? The answer goes back--again--to the angels who interbred with humans.

So then--is it impossible that Azazel is somehow another name for Satan? One cannot be dogmatic on it, but as is typical on this issue, Azazel and Satan were not viewed as the same creature before post-apostolic revisionists--after being faced with a problematic verse--concluded that it *had* to be referring to Satan, because the traditional understanding offended them.

* It should be noted that some theologians hold the view that Satan and his angels are “**bound**” in the sense that we are (supposedly) living in the Millennial reign of Christ, and Satan and his angels cannot stop the spread the Gospel. While some fine teachers approach the Scriptures from that sort of perspective, the author is not amongst the camp of those who repeatedly see the Bible as talking in metaphors, and almost never being literal when dealing with the supernatural or end times.

5. One wonders how much more proof should be necessary to conclude that Jude held the same belief on the issue of Genesis 6 as everyone else of his time. Verse 4 begins with, “**And the angels...**” and verse 5 concludes, “**even as Sodom and Gomorrha...in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh.**” are crystal clear that sexual impropriety existed both in Sodom and amongst some fallen angels who went beyond the bounds God allotted to them! I reiterate that most everyone believed this doctrine until Augustine fought to overturn it, and it may be helpful to again cite from the very book Jude is quoting on the subject:

It happened after the sons of men had multiplied in those days, that daughters were born to them, elegant and beautiful. And when the angels, the sons of heaven, beheld them, they became enamored of them, saying to each other: Come, let us select for ourselves wives from the progeny of men, and let us beget children.
--1 Enoch 7:1-2.

6. This is Jewish tradition penned in the *Assumption of Moses*. Interestingly, Jude states this as a known fact, not as speculation or poetic license, proving that some non-canonical books do present at least some inerrant truth not found in canonical Scripture alone. Also, commonly missed is the fact that this verse demolishes the teaching of some that Jesus is the archangel Michael. We see here that Michael is less powerful than Satan, and had to call upon the name of God to drive Satan off. Jesus, in contrast, when personally dealing with the devil, even in human form uses *His own* word, without calling on “**the LORD**,” to rebuke Satan--because He *is* God!

7. Better translated as: “**Reefs**”--rocks in the way of a sailing vessel that can cause it to wreck and be lost.

8. The feasts spoken of are the early Christian love feasts, at which they basically had potlucks, fellowship, and worship.

9. While the reference to “**wandering stars**” may simply be Jude’s way of saying these people are “doing their own thing,” and will be judged for it, the fact that he adds they will be banished to a realm of utter darkness suggests he is again referring to the fallen angels of Genesis 6 who were banished to Tartarus. Otherwise, Jude is recalling the legends about some stars in the heavens who were banished for refusing to obey God’s command to come forth to their ordained positions on the day of creation. James may allude to this as well when he mentions there is no “**shadow of turning**” in God, who is the “**Father of stars**” (accurately, but misleadingly, translated as “**Father of lights**”).

10. A quote from 1 Enoch 58:9. The Bible does not say Enoch was the seventh son of Adam; in fact, Enoch was the son of Jared. The use of the word “**Seventh**” is apparently mystical, and may be an attempt to tag Enoch as the head of the seventh generation from Adam.

11. The prophecy is from 1 Enoch 2:1. Deut. 33:2 uses some similar language, but only Enoch words it in this way, which is significant--for it shows how much Jude must have esteemed this book. Had Jude relegated it to mere myth, as modern theologians do, we must ask why he would quote the Book of Enoch instead of building on Deut. 33:2. Jude’s quoting Enoch like this clearly suggests he accepted its teachings in the same way virtually all of Christianity and Judaism did into the 2nd century.

12. “**Separate themselves**” means those who cause division by opposing the teachers of truth.
 13. There is some debate over what Jude means by “**praying in the Holy Ghost**.” Is he referring to praying in Tongues? Possibly. This may be likely, based on 1 Cor. 14:4, since Jude equates the prayer with ‘**building up**’ oneself. Otherwise, he is merely exhorting the people to pray according to the revealed will of God in Scripture.
 14. The sentence may be better paraphrased as: “*And have compassion on those whose faith is weak.*”
 15. “**With fear**” is an addition from later centuries. It should otherwise be noted that the Greek in these two verses is extremely hard to understand, and this is why the paraphrase is different from the way the KJV renders it.
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2nd PETER

2nd Peter was written somewhere around 67 AD, shortly before Peter's martyrdom in Rome. It is the most controversial book of the New Testament because a wide variety of scholars deny its authenticity. There is no real mention of it before the early 3rd century and Origen, though some believe that Clement of Rome and Justin Martyr allude to it in their writings.

Ultimately Christians can rely on the epistle as a matter of faith, for in a biblical worldview it is unthinkable that God could not protect the New Testament sufficiently to avoid a spurious epistle's inclusion.

2nd PETER CHAPTER 1

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:¹
2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,²
3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:³
4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature⁴, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵
9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.
10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:
11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.
13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;
14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.
15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.
16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power

2nd PETER CHAPTER 1

1 **S**himon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to [the Gentiles] who have obtained the same precious faith as us through the righteousness of God, and our Savior Jesus Christ:
2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.
3 Through Christ's divine power he has given us all we need to walk in life and godliness through our ever-increasing knowledge of Him who called us to glory and goodness.
4 Through that power you also have been given very great and precious promises, so that through them you might be conformed to his divine nature, having escaped the [soul-polluting] corruption of the world and the deceitful desires those in it yearn for.
5 Besides this, be diligent to add a high moral standard to your faith along with [God's sort of] knowledge.
6 To [God's sort of] knowledge, add self-control. And to self-control, add patience. And to patience, add godliness.
7 To godliness, add compassion for your brethren. And to compassion for your brethren, add a self-sacrificing sort of love.
8 For if these traits abound in you, they will place you in position to never be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9 But the person who lacks these qualities is [spiritually] blind, and cannot see past his own nose, for he has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.
10 So don't be like that, brethren. Instead, make every effort to secure your calling and election by pursuing these things, and you will never fall--
11 And a warm welcome will await you in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
12 Thus, I will not neglect constantly reiterating these things to you, though you've heard them before and are standing in the truth even now.
13 Indeed, I think it good, so long as I am alive in the tent of this earthly body, to re-ignite the fire of zeal in you by reminding you of these things.
14 For I know that shortly I will leave this body behind, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me.
15 I want to make sure that after my departure you will never forget these things.
16 For we were not following cunningly designed myths when we proclaimed the power and incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ--we were actually eyewitnesses of his majesty.

and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.⁶

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when a voice issued forth from His incomprehensible radiance that said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"

18 And this *Bat Kol* [--heavenly voice--] we heard with our own ears when we were with him in the Holy Mount.

19 We thus have a more certain verification of the prophetic word found in the Scriptures, which you are doing well to heed as a light that shines in the darkness until the day dawns and the daystar arises in your hearts.

19 [*Alternate reading*]: But we have a more certain "word" than *that*, which you are doing well to heed as a light that shines in the darkness until the day dawns and the daystar arises in your hearts. [That "word" is the Scriptures.]

20 First, know this: No prophecy in the Scriptures ever unraveled through the prophet's own private [understanding, speculation, or intention].

21 For prophecy did not, in the olden days, come forth by *human* will. Instead, holy men of God spoke as the *Holy Spirit* moved them to speak.

1. That this epistle is written to Gentiles is indicated by use of the word "**them**" in verse 1, and Peter's acknowledgment that both he and the group he writes to have precisely the same faith.

2. As is so often the case, it is by knowing God more fully and intimately--typically through study and prayer--that both grace and peace are produced in the life of the believer.

3. Here, Peter expounds on the notion that in Christ is the fullness of the Christian experience, and through imitation of His ways we become what God means for us to be.

4. There have been some debates on just what the "**divine nature**" of God is with respect to humans partaking of it. The practical impartation of that nature is primarily the fruit of the Spirit Paul deals with in Gal. 5:22.

5. Much as it is frustrating to us, these traits of the Spirit, while present in the believer, must be yielded to. In other words, God empowers us to walk in these things, but it is almost always by choice.

6. This verse is hard to render into English, and doesn't mean to say that one cannot receive a revelation about a Scripture on his own; its point, based on a noun about untying a knot, indicates a genitive of source, regarding origin, to declare that the prophets of old had no part in releasing--i.e., bringing forth--prophecy, or in determining what those prophecies foretold, which is confirmed in the following verse! This fact absolutely refutes the Catholic notion that only the Teaching Magisterium of the Church has the right to interpret Scripture, and believers or other denominations are forbidden to read and interpret the Bible for themselves.

2nd PETER CHAPTER 2

1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.¹

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.²

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;³

5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:⁴

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

2nd PETER CHAPTER 2

1 But there were false prophets in those days among the people, as there will be false teachers among you today--who will slip in damnable heresies, including even a denial of the Lord who purchased them [with his blood], bringing upon themselves swift destruction!

2 Many will imitate their licentious behavior, and because of this, "The Way of Truth" will be blasphemed [by outsiders].

3 In their greed, they will speak with lying tongues of flattery, and strip you of all your goods. But their judgment and condemnation has been decreed from long ago, and will not be put off.

4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned [by cohabiting with humans], but cast them down into Tartarus, where they are chained in utter darkness until their time of judgment...

5 And if God did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, the eighth person on the Ark--who was a preacher of righteousness--while sending the flood upon the world of the ungodly...

6 And if He turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning and overthrowing them, thus making them an example to those who afterward would live in an ungodly manner...

7-9 And if He delivered Lot, a just man who was grieved at the debauched lifestyle of the wicked there, for that righteous man who dwelt among them, seeing and hearing

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities⁵.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them⁶ before the Lord.

12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.⁷

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.⁸

21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

what was going on, was grieved in his righteous soul as he watched their evil deeds day after day...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trials, while appointing the unjust to receive punishment on the Day of Judgment!

10 And the ones who will be especially punished are those who walk after the flesh in unclean sexual lust, and despise any rule over them. They are arrogant, self-willed, and have no fear of mocking the angels [who oversee church propriety].

11 But even the angels, who are greater in power and might [than mere humans], don't make any railing accusations against these people before the Lord.

12 But these people, like dumb animals acting on instinct alone--fit only to be taken and destroyed--disrespect and criticize what they don't understand, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.

13 They will reap the reward of unrighteousness [just as freely] as they think nothing of debauchery in broad daylight. They are spotted and wrinkled [like unclean sacrifices not fit for God], glorying in their deception while they feast alongside you.

14 Their eyes are ever open to sexual sin, and they cannot turn from unrighteousness. They deceive unstable people, and are cursed children with hearts of greed,

15 Who have forsaken the right way and gone off path, walking down the road of Balaam, son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

16 But he was rebuked for his iniquity when his mute donkey spoke with a man's voice to criticize this prophet's madness.

17 These people are empty wells. They are waterless clouds [--looking good but offering nothing--] blown about in a storm, to whom everlasting darkness awaits.

18 For when they speak their arrogant words of vanity, they entice back into sin those who have just escaped such error and become clean, by appealing to the wanton lust of their flesh.

19 While they promise them freedom, these men are nothing more than slaves of corruption, for a man is enslaved by what he lets overcome him.

20 For if, after someone has escaped the pollution of the [unsaved] world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, his ultimate end is far worse than he was when he started if he becomes entangled in unrighteousness again.

21 It is better for such people to have never known the path of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn from the holy commandment [--to repent, and be holy as He is holy--] that was delivered to them.

22 In their case, the proverbs are true that: *The dog is turned to his own vomit again. And: The sow that was washed, [returned] to her wallowing in the mire.*

1. A modern-day example of these two verses would be the way some liberal Christian denominations have endorsed Gay marriage, and actually persecuted affiliated churches taking a biblical stand against the leadership's new take on the subject.

2. The verse is better paraphrased as: *"In their greed, they will speak with lying tongues of flattery, and strip you of all your goods. But their judgment and condemnation has been decreed from long ago, and will not be put off."*

3. The reason angels are being brought into the mix is that God's Law was delivered to the people *through* the angels (Acts 7:53, Gal. 3:19), and since those angels who rebelled and perverted God's ways and plan in Genesis 6 were consigned to the Pit, so the false teachers perverting the people will not escape their own judgment.

Starting with a theory by Julius Africanus created to make Christianity palatable to pagan critics (while Judaism got the view from an insane rabbi of the 2nd century who lived in a cave*), some sages attempted to redefine the events of Genesis 6 to the popular "Godly line of Seth" teaching that has taken root today. However, both Peter and Jude make reference to the apocryphal Book of Enoch, which affirms the traditional understanding up to Africanus and the rabbi that *angels* bred with humans and were judged for

it.

An attempt by some to claim the doctrine was taught in the first century by an appeal to one sentence of a scrap of the DSS falls apart under scrutiny in that the parchment says nothing about the line of Seth producing giant offspring with the line of Cain (the name “Seth” technically isn’t even in the parchment, by the way, “Sheth”** is, and it appears to be speaking of a tribe of unrighteous people, possibly Egyptian). Such a doctrine would contradict the official doctrine of the Essenes anyway, taught in their *Book of the Giants*! Likewise, an appeal to the spurious book of *Pseudo Philo*, arbitrarily dated to the first century only because it speaks of the Temple in the present tense—which it naturally would since it represents itself as being written by a man who died in 50 AD!—is persuasively dated to the second century by professor Howard Jacobson and other scholars who point out there is no 1st century parchment or witness attestation for it whatever. All witnesses for the document appear after the 1st century. Secondly, the concept that the line of Seth was ever godly to start with is open to debate! First, the portion of Scripture in Gen. 4:24 (“...then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.”) may be a mistranslation! Some of the ancient Jewish sages—Ibn Ezra, Nachmanides, and Maimonides—together with the Aramaic Targums understood it along the lines of, “**profane the name of the Lord**”! This is what would have set the stage for the Flood, and demolishes the notion that Seth’s line was especially godly to start with! Credence for this notion can be found in the undisputed fact that Cain and Abel—the generation right before Seth—are both shown to be worshipping and sacrificing to God, so there is nothing new about “calling on the name of the Lord” with *Seth’s* arrival!

**** For God’s ordinance is engraved over all the iniquities of the sons of Sheth, and a book of memorial is written before Him of all those who keep His word.**

Patristic sources on whether or not the Sons of God were fallen angels:

Clement of Rome: **Yes.**
 Justin Martyr: **Yes.**
 Iraneus of Lyons: **Yes.**
 Clement of Alexandria: **Yes.**
 Julius Africanus: *Probably not*, but **maybe.**
 Tertullian: **Yes.**
 Athenagoras of Alexandria: **Yes.**
 Lactantius : **Yes.**
 Eusebius of Caesarea: **Yes.**
 Ephraim the Syrian: *No.*
 Hilary of Poitiers: **Yes.**
 Jerome: **Yes.**
 John Chrysostom: *No.*
 Augustine: *No.*
 Sulpicius Severus: **Yes.**
 Ambrose: **Yes.**

4. It is interesting that Peter extols Lot’s righteousness, considering how he commits incest with his daughters after getting drunk.
5. The “**dignities**” refers to the angels themselves, who in Jewish thought were prepared to judge impropriety in the church (1 Cor. 11:10).
6. The “**them**” is debatable. Many would say it refers to making accusations against fallen angels (Jude 9). A less-popular view would be that which is expressed here: That it refers to the human mockers Peter is denouncing.
7. Peter’s whole point in these passages has been to criticize the heresy of liberal theology and liberal theologians who express tolerance for unrighteousness by teaching that the Scriptures support sins like sexual freedom.
8. What a sad commentary on the Christian experience for some. The problem arises when a man seeks to justify his sin, rather than being grieved by it. From this point, he can receive a spirit of deception that causes him to sincerely believe a lie he knew was wrong when he started out, and the end result is a man who thinks he is walking in truth when in fact he has surrendered to the powers of darkness.

2nd PETER CHAPTER 3

1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:
 2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:
 3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,
 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.¹
 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:
 6 Whereby the world that then was, being

2nd PETER CHAPTER 3

1-2 This second letter, beloved, I now write, hoping to again stir up your pure minds to remember the words spoken of in the past by the holy prophets; and to recall the commandment given by we apostles of the Lord and Savior:
 3-4 First, be aware that in the last days scoffers, walking in their own lusts, will arise, saying: “Where is the promise of his second coming? Since our ancestors died, nothing has changed since the world began—it’s always the same!”
 5 But they choose to willingly be ignorant that by God’s command, the universe was created in the olden times, and the earth itself was formed out of water and by water--
 6 And through an inundation of water, the older world was destroyed [in Noah’s time].
 7 But the present heavens and the earth, by the same spoken command of God, are being reserved for the

overflowed with water, perished:¹

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.²

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.³

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting⁴ unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood,⁵ which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures⁶, unto their own destruction.

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

eventual fate of being consumed by fire in the Day of Judgment, when ungodly men will go down to perdition.

8 But, beloved, don't be ignorant of the fact that, from God's perspective, *One day to Him is as a thousand years to us*--and a thousand years to us is like one day to Him! [In other words, a thousand years of time is no more noticeable to *Him* than a day is to us; and He can accomplish in a day what would take a thousand years otherwise!]

9 See, the Lord is not slow regarding His promise as some men count slowness. But He is patient to humanity, not wanting any to be lost, but desiring that all men should repent.

10 But when the Lord *does* come, the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night! In that one day the cosmos will pass away with a great roar as the building blocks of the universe melt with tremendous heat. The earth also, and everything in it, will be consumed in that fire.

11-12 So, given the fact that all we see will dissolve in destruction, what sort of person should you be with respect to living a godly lifestyle as you look for and eagerly await the Day of God, when the skies of the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved in great heat along with building blocks of the universe?

11-12 [*Alternate reading*]: So, given the fact that all we see will dissolve in destruction, what sort of person should you be with respect to living a godly lifestyle as you look for and hasten the Day of God, when the skies of the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved in great heat along with building blocks of the universe?

13 Even so we, according to the promise Christ made, look forward to a new universe and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell.

14 Because of your looking forward to this, beloved, be diligent to maintain your lifestyle in such a way that he can find you in peace, being spotless and blameless.

15 And consider that the forbearance of the Lord in returning is for the purpose of saving people, even as our beloved brother Paul, using the wisdom given him, has written to you as well,

16 Speaking of things like this in all his epistles, though some things he says are hard to understand, and the unlearned and non-committed twist his words--as they do the other Scriptures--to their own destruction.

17 Beloved, since you have always known these things, beware, lest you also--being led away by the error of the wicked--abandon your own perseverance.

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

1. A very appropriate warning for today.

2. Peter, in the last few verses, is basically saying: "God created everything with a word--and He can destroy it just as easily." The point is, when judgment comes, it can come with no warning.

3. Some have wondered just why it has taken so long for Christ's return. The reason is twofold: 1--God wants to bear with fallen humanity for as long as possible to reach out to sinners. And 2--He isn't in a hurry, for time means nothing to Him.

4. There are a couple of different ways of understanding this verse: Either that the people of God *hasten* Christ's return, or else *eagerly await* it. The author has given both paraphrases, but the variant paraphrase seems less likely than the first rendering.

5. Don't feel bad if some of Paul's teachings and phraseology seem confusing--Peter had problems with his writings too!

6. It's very important to note that Peter here affirms Paul's writings are to be treated as Scripture. This is very important because some fools--often on the subject of homosexuality--will say something stupid like, "Jesus never mentioned homosexuality!"

(Actually, He did in Revelation.) Jesus' words carry no more or less weight than the most insignificant prophet of the Old Testament, the words of God on Mount Sinai--or the words of Paul. Any word of Scripture affirmed in the New covenant is as authoritative and binding as any word that ever came from the mouth of Christ--and, in fact, is directly inspired by Christ Himself no matter who wrote it!

HEBREWS

Hebrews is noteworthy for the fact that it is written using some of the finest Greek of any book of the New Testament. Even so, it is badly translated in parts, particularly in chapter 9. The true authors of the Epistle have always been a mystery, but only the unparalleled genius of Paul can account for the brilliance of thought contained throughout the epistle, though he definitely co-wrote it with someone else, perhaps Apollos or Barnabas who contributed “**few words**,” but apparently penned the actual document. It may have been written to a Messianic community in Alexandria.

It is likely this epistle was Paul’s final thesis to outline how Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of Judaism and its sacrificial system. The intended audience was apparently observant Christian Jews, and the book was in no way, shape, or form written for the consumption of Gentile Christians! It must be understood only within the context of a Jewish milieu, and divorced from Western thought. To do otherwise invariably leads to confusion and misunderstanding of the text, particularly in the case of the 6th chapter, which speaks about those who apostatize from the faith and cannot return.

The occasion of its writing seems to be at a time when Jewish Christians were facing persecution for their faith, perhaps from both the Jewish and pagan communities. In such circumstances, some were leaving the faith and returning to traditional Judaism, while others were being banned from the Jewish community and were concerned that somehow their sins weren’t being covered since circumstances prevented them from initiating the animal sacrifices mandated by the Torah. To counter the concern, the writers explain in detail that all Temple sacrifice pointed to the atonement of Christ, and that--now and forever--the ultimate sacrifice for sin has already been accomplished, making the Temple rituals no longer efficacious. In fact, those who now return to that system in the belief that animal sacrifice can atone for sin have now rejected salvation altogether by denying the atonement of Christ that all these sacrifices pointed to! The repeated theme of the book is to illustrate how the New covenant of the Messiah is “**better**” than the Mosaic covenant ever was.

Finally, Gnostic beliefs about the *Aeons*, an angelic race of demigods whose realm was between earth and heaven, may account for the repeated references to the subordinate role of angels to Christ in the Book of Hebrews. The epistle was written somewhere around 65-67 AD.

Note: Some points must be made about the word *suneidesis*, translated as “**conscience**” throughout this epistle. The word refers to the ability to make moral and intellectual judgments between right and wrong, and also the intrinsic sense of being convicted over failure; or feeling confident in one’s standing with God. The writer appears to use it in a variety of ways herein, some of which seem to correspond more comfortably to modern phrases like *inner man* or *sinful nature* than simply *conscience* as we understand it, and the paraphrase will make use of these phrases to help impart the writer’s meaning more clearly in our language.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 1

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;¹
3 Who being the brightness of his glory,² and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.
5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to

HEBREWS CHAPTER 1

1 od, who at different times and various ways, spoke in times past to our ancestors through the prophets,
2 Has, in these last days, spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed to inherit all things, and through whom He also created the cosmos.
3 He is the radiant glory of God [--the *Shekhina*--] and the perfect reflection of God, sustaining all things by the awesome power of his spoken word. When he, single-handedly, purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of Majesty on High,
4 Being exalted so much more than any of the angels, because he inherited a more excellent position of authority than they.
5 For when did God ever say to a mere angel: **Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?** And: **I will be to him**

me a Son?³

6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.⁴

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.⁵

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

6 God also said, when He sent His firstborn into the world: **And let all the angels of God worship him.**

7 But regarding angels, God said: **...who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.**

8 In comparison, He said about His Son: **Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.**

9 **Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.**

10 **And: Thou, Lord: In the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:**

11 **They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;**

12 **And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.**

13 And when did God ever say to any mere angel: **Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?!**

14 So then--aren't angels [simply] ministering spirits sent forth to aid those who will be the heirs of salvation?!

1. The writer immediately points out that the Messiah has been given pre-eminence over all spiritual entities, and that the entire cosmos--and even time and the events in it--was created or ordained by Him.

2. **"Brightness of his glory"** is a means of conveying that Christ came forth from the very essence of God Himself. This terminology is used because in Jewish thought when Moses and various Patriarchs saw "God," what they actually saw was the *Shekhina* of God that radiated forth and took human form upon the earth. The parallel to Christian thought about Christ being God manifested in the flesh is obvious. This does not necessarily mean that the concept of the *Shekhina* is correct theology; it means only that the writer was using concepts his readers would have understood.

3. We see in verses 4-8 an answer to the heresy taught by groups who claim that Jesus is an angelic creature, albeit the chief angel in heaven: The writer repeatedly makes a distinction between angels and the Messiah.

4. However one wishes to define **"worship"** here, this verse speaks to the deity of Christ, for while God's angels never accept any form of worship from men, nor permit men to bend their knees to them, Scripture shows they never so little as nod their heads in respect to men as great as Moses or Peter otherwise!

5. Verses 8-9 are a quote from Psalm 45:6.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 2

1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?¹

5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.²

6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

HEBREWS CHAPTER 2

1 Therefore, we should keep careful watch on remaining firmly anchored to the things we have heard, lest at any time we get apathetic or begin to forget, and one day find we have drifted onto the shoals of catastrophe!

2 For if the decree spoken by *angels* [at Sinai] held full authority, and every transgression and disobedience of it resulted in justifiable punishment,

3 How shall *we* escape [judgment] if we ignore such a great [means of] salvation that was proclaimed first by the Lord and then confirmed to us by those who heard him personally?

4 God also confirmed their testimony with signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit as He willed to do.

5 Also, God has not planned for the *angels* to have charge over the [re-created earth and age to come], which we preach about.

6 For in the Scriptures, God said through David: **What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?**

7 **Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:**

8 **Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.**

Now in God's saying that He had put **"all things"** under subjection to man, He obviously left nothing *out* of subjection

8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. 10 For it became him³, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. 13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. 14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;⁴ that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;⁵ 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.⁶ 16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.⁷

to him [--including all angelic beings]. But at the present time, [while things are *positionally* under man through Christ,] we do not actually see them under his *practical* authority yet. 9 What we do see is Jesus, *who was made a little weaker than the angels* so that he could suffer physical death, now *crowned with glory and honor*, so that he--because of God's grace [toward us]--should taste death for every mortal man. 10 For it was appropriate to God, to whom all things belong, and by whom all things were commanded to come into being, to make the agent of mankind's salvation complete through suffering [in the body] so that he could bring many sons to glory. 11 For both Jesus, who did the sanctifying, and those whom he has sanctified, have the same Father, and form one family unit. This is why he is not ashamed to call them his brothers, 12 For he said: **I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.** 13 And also: **I will put my trust in him. And: Behold I, and the children which God hath given me.** 14 So, since the "**children**" are flesh and blood beings, Jesus likewise became flesh and blood, so that through enduring [-- and conquering--] death, he might defeat [and strip of authority] the devil, who had the authority over death. 15 In doing this, Jesus would deliver those who, through the fear of death [and what comes afterward], were in bondage all of their lives. 16 And to do this, Jesus did not take on the nature of angels but instead took on the nature of humanity by coming through physical descent of Abraham. 17 This is why it was appropriate for Jesus, in all ways, to be made in the same image of us, his brothers, so that he could be a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, making reconciliation [and atonement] for the sins of the people. 18 For since he suffered and conquered all the sorts of temptations and trials *we* face, he is able to aid us in all of them.

1. As he begins chapter two, the writer begins to warn of the awful risk of rejecting the message delivered by the Messiah through pointing out how judgment fell when the Law that was given by angels was ignored by the people. How much more serious, he asks, is it to reject the message of One so much greater than the angels that He both created and sustains the universe itself?
2. Verse 5 is speaking of the Messianic Age, in which no angel shall have absolute authority--but the Messiah will, with redeemed humanity ruling under him (1 Cor. 6:2-3).
3. The "**Him**" is the Father.
4. The "**children**" are, of course, us. The verse here is saying that in order to fully make us children of God and brethren of Messiah, Christ had to become human like all of us so that God could view us no differently than He did Him.
5. The second part of the verse now shifts into the metaphysical. In a sense, the author is saying that since Jesus partook of death and then overcame it, He made Himself the master over death, superseding the devil's power, which is limited to only killing, but not making alive. This is how Christ now has the "**keys of hell and death**" (Rev. 1:18).
6. In the ancient world, death was greatly feared, for the afterlife in many cultures was thought to be an unpleasant place of wandering and emptiness.
7. Again, because He has experienced and overcome the temptations we face, Christ has authority over them and the ability, through His Spirit, to enable us to likewise overcome. Once more, this is a metaphysical teaching that since Christ endured and resisted all possible temptation and trial without sinning or losing faith, He has authority over temptation itself and, in theory, can impart His supernatural grace to aid us against it.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 3

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; 2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. 3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath

HEBREWS CHAPTER 3

1 Because of this, holy brethren and partakers of the heavenly calling, keep in mind the Messenger and High Priest whom we profess, Christ Jesus, 2 Who was faithful to God who appointed him, in the same way Moses was *faithful regarding all the things in His "House"* [--the Tent Tabernacle in the wilderness]. 3 For this man, Jesus, was counted more worthy of honor than

built the house hath more honour than the house.¹
 4 For every house is built by some man; but he that built all things is God.
 5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;
 6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.
 7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,
 8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:
 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.
 10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.
 11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)²
 12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief³, in departing from the living God.
 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.⁴
 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;
 15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.
 16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.
 17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?
 18 And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?
 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief⁵.

even Moses, in the same way a man who builds a house is entitled to more honor than the structure he erects is.
 4 For every house is built by some man, but God is the one who created all the things that house is made from [—including the man who builds it].
 5 And Moses truly was *faithful regarding all the things in His “House”* as merely a slave when he ministered in God’s Tent Tabernacle, being a precursor to greater things that were prophesied to come in later centuries.
 6 But Christ was faithful as a *son* over His Temple—whose Temple *we* are, provided we cleave to the hope in which we glory and rejoice, and hold fast to the end!
 7 Now listen—remember what the Holy Spirit said: **Today if ye will hear his voice,**
8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:
9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.
10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.
11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.
 12 So beware, brethren, lest any of you depart from the Living God through an evil heart that is skeptical of what God says.
 13 But encourage one another daily—because every day is “**Today**”—lest any of you harden your hearts through the deceitfulness of sin.
 14 For we will share all Christ has if we hold our original confidence firm to the end.
 15 And for us, this will always be an axiom to heed: **Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.**
 16 For some who heard the message of their time did provoke God—though not all who came out of Egypt with Moses were guilty of this.
 17 But with whom was God “**grieved**” during the forty years in the wilderness? Wasn’t it with those who sinned [—despite being given the promise—] whose bodies fell in the wilderness?
 18 And who was it, but these same people who would not believe, that God swore ‘*would not enter into His rest*’?
 19 So we see that they could not enter [into the Promised Land of God’s rest] because they could not believe [what they had been promised].

1. The thought here now begins to turn to illustrating how Moses and the covenant given by him is an inferior shadow to the ultimate covenant instituted by Messiah.

2. The next thought begins to show how rejection of the Message of God in this day—no matter how sincere—carries with it the same penalty faced by the Hebrews in the wilderness who likewise refused to believe what God had said through Moses. Likewise, the Jews in the day of this epistle were faced with a choice to believe or disbelieve the message from God. To disbelieve the Gospel of Messiah in favor of the elders’ philosophy on what Judaism and the Messiah were to be was to face the same penalty as the Hebrews: death, and failure to enter the Promised Land.

3. *Apistea*, the word here for “**unbelief**,” is the same word used in the Matt. 13:58 (“**And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief**”) and in 1 Tim. 1:13 (“**...who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief**”). The word means to question what was heard, or not have enough faith to believe in God’s ability to perform what He has said He will do. In this context, some of the Jews were stumbling over their preconceived notions about justification and the Messiah, both of which are contradicted by Christianity, which divorced justification from keeping Mosaic Law, and presented a crucified Messiah as an atonement for sin, two concepts anathema to rabbinic Judaism.

4. There is a dual meaning to this verse: First, there is a warning against embracing false doctrine that leads to rejecting the truth in a stubborn, obstinate way. The second is that willful sin invariably leads to a person’s losing his ability to have faith—including the faith to keep salvation, for enough of a lifestyle of sin will cause a person to cease wanting God, or else lead to a point of deception where sin is justified. *Sin absolutely contaminates both the mortal body and immortal spirit of a person (2 Cor. 7:1), and the harm to the spirit lies in the fact that sin—especially sexual sin—hardens the heart in a way that it can rob truth and faith from the heart, while often leaving the carnal intellect untouched. What makes this so*

insidious is that it results in many Christians actually walking around in a state of damnation because, while they still intellectually understand and accept the cross, their hearts have actually been hardened through sin against releasing saving faith in the cross, and thus their violations of conscience has unwittingly placed them in the position of keeping intellectual assent about Christ, while actually losing Him in their hearts!

5. This word (*apeitheia*) refers to the hardest form of unbelief, showing that after the Hebrews had a problem believing what God had said—they finally *refused* to believe, and died in the wilderness.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 4

1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.
 2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.¹
 3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.
 4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.
 5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.
 6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:
 7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
 8 For if Jesus² had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.
 9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.³
 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.
 11 Let us labour⁴ therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.
 12 For the word of God⁵ is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
 13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.
 14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.
 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin⁶
 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 4

1 Therefore, let us take nothing for granted, lest any seem to come short of the promise that *we* will enter God's rest.
 2 For to us was the "Good news" preached, just as it was to the Israelites of Moses' time. But in their case it did not bear fruit because the people of that time [did not mix the promise of rest with conscious belief it would come to pass].
 3 But those of us who *have* believed are the ones who enter into rest. Remember what God said: *As I have sworn in my wrath, they shall never enter into my rest.* God said this, even though His works [and the entire timeline of human history] had been pre-ordained and formed from the foundation of the world.
 4 For in the Scriptures, God spoke about this thing that was represented by the Sabbath: **And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.**
 5 And elsewhere: *They shall not enter into my rest.*
 6-7 Since it is apparent, then, that at least *some* must enter into rest, and the first ones to whom the message came did not enter in because they refused to believe, God established "**Today**" [to fulfill His promise], saying much later, through David as we noted: **Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**
 8 For if *Joshua* had given Israel rest, God would not have later spoken through *David* of another day of rest still to come!
 9 Thus, there is, and shall come, a Rest for the people of God.
 10 For he that is entered into God's rest has also ceased from his own works, just as God did [--for the work is entirely complete at that point, needing nothing more added to it].
 11 So let us endeavor to enter into that rest, lest any man be caught up in the same trap of refusing to believe what he has been told.
 12 For the word of God is alive, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and can even divide the soul from the body, the [physical from the metaphysical], and "tells it like it is" when it exposes the motivations of the thoughts and intents of our heart against what it teaches and proclaims.
 13 Likewise, there is no man who can hide anything from God's sight--all our thoughts and motivations are an open book to Him to whom we shall stand before [and give account].
 14 But since we have a great High Priest who has passed through [and ministers in] heaven itself--Jesus, the Son of God--let us hold fast to our faith and confidence.
 15 For we do not have a High Priest who does not understand what we are going through. Our High Priest [--though perfect--] was, in fact, tempted in all the ways we face temptation, but he did not sin.
 16 So let us fearlessly approach the throne from which all grace flows, and we will find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.

1. The writer here alludes to the fact that although the Hebrews had been told the Promised Land was theirs, their failure to believe and act upon the promise cursed them with death. As we see in Numbers 14, their refusal to believe God caused them to turn against Moses and earned them a curse that killed off most of an entire generation who had been promised a land God wanted to give them.

2. The "**Jesus**" spoken of here is Joshua, not Christ. (*Jesus* is the Greek form of the name Joshua, which means "God saves." or

“God is salvation.”)

3. This verse can, and does, cause some confusion. The word “**rest**” can arguably be said to encourage observance of the Jewish Sabbath. One might wonder, then, if the text is saying the Christians must keep the Sabbath. The Eastern text takes this view and renders the verse as: “**So the people of God must observe the Sabbath.**”

The Greek, more literally, says: “*There is left off (or left behind) Sabbathing [Sabbath-resting] to the people of God.*”

The problem is, this verse can be interpreted more than one way. The KJV appears to be correct when it interprets this as saying a *future* rest in Christ remains for the people of God to look forward to—which perfectly fits the tone of verses 3-8—rather than that continually keeping the Saturday Sabbath is left behind for Christians, which does not fit the message of the chapter at all! The writer is also affirming that entering the rest of God is through belief, and uses the Sabbath as representative of the ultimate rest that was coming through Christ’s work of redemption. Be careful, he points out in verse 11, that you do not disqualify yourself from that rest—not by profaning the Sabbath, but by unbelief!

One way to help define the meaning of the verse is the fact that the word for “**rest**” (*Sabbatismos*), as noted, is never used elsewhere, even in the Septuagint. Instead, *Sabbaton* is used nearly everywhere else in the New Testament as a word for the Sabbath; and the writer’s going out of his way to use *Sabbatismos* to refine his point as relates to the Sabbath can reasonably mean that he is intentionally pointing to the *rest* of the Sabbath, rather than the literal *observance* of the Sabbath.

Sabbatarians, however, would use this verse to claim that Christians must keep the Sabbath, so we must ask if we can establish elsewhere from Scripture whether Sabbath-keeping was enjoined upon the Gentiles. When we check the New Testament, we find that we cannot, for if we go to the Book of Acts, chapter 21:20, James acknowledges that while the Christian *Jews* were all “**zealous**” for the Torah—which obviously means they were zealous in keeping the Sabbath—the same James, in the same breath (verse 25), acknowledges that the elders have instructed the Gentiles that they are relieved from the obligation to keep Mosaic Law, which would include the Sabbath commands! (And previously, the Holy Spirit in Acts 15 also pointedly omitted requiring Sabbath observance for the Gentiles.) Thus, Gentiles were relieved of the obligation to keep the Sabbath, and what is mentioned in the Book of Hebrews about the *Jewish* Christians keeping the Sabbath is not necessarily a command for the Gentile believers to do likewise, but rather an explanation of what the Sabbath represents!

We also note that the writer has been specifically talking about Jewish history and Law, which has no application to a Gentile audience anyway, and if we note the context of the chapter and this book as a whole, we see he has also been dealing with types and shadows of the Old Testament that have their fulfillment in Messiah; and he has been pointing out the superiority of the New covenant over the Mosaic covenant. (By the way, those who teach the false doctrine that there is really only one “renewed” covenant need to read Gal. 4:24.)

The whole subject of this chapter is that the ultimate rest of God hinted at in Old Testament times was not fulfilled until Messiah, despite the fact that the Hebrews did actually enter what was called the “**Promised Land**”. For us, the subject of the chapter is *how* to enter the true “**rest of God**”—and the writer reveals this is by *believing*! His point is that the Sabbath was given to illustrate the point of justification through believing, which was to be fulfilled in Messiah. From that point, mankind could rest from its own efforts at achieving righteousness through its works and obedience. The Sabbath-keeping of the Jews in the time of this letter was only showing, according to the writer, that there still remains a “**rest**” in the future: i.e., the Resurrection and Messianic Age. But is the writer somehow making the point that, even though Messiah has come, we must make sure we keep the Sabbath to show we are the people of God?

Given the fact that the argument must appeal to vague verses like this, and the lack of repeated New Testament command and exhortation for Gentiles to keep the Sabbath—absolutely not! In fact, a much stronger argument can be made that Galatians actually rebukes the Gentiles for observing all four forms of the Sabbath: the Sabbath days; the Sabbath new moons; the Festival Sabbaths; and apparently a Sabbath year! The modern-day Judaizer, of course, throws a fit at that notion—but we must then reject his call upon us to prove to *his* satisfaction that the Sabbath is not a requirement, and instead require *him* to show how 2000 years of Christianity has misunderstood Paul on this issue. His choices from that point are to claim that Galatians must refer to pagan observances that coincidentally are identical to the Torah Sabbaths; or that Galatians is actually *praising* the people for Sabbath observance, and we Gentiles have just misunderstood the text for 2000 years(!); or that the Catholic Church altered the Scriptures to start with! But the fact that no credible historic evidence from the 1st century shows acceptance of Sabbatarianism among non-proselyte Gentile churches started by the apostles (except for Paul rebuking the Galatians for it) is impossible to dismiss. In fact, the 1st century *Didache*—the first guidebook of the Christian faith—mandates Sunday observance for Christians, while Acts 20:7 shows church gatherings and Communion specifically taking place on *Sunday*, rather than Saturday!

Ignatius of Antioch, second or third bishop of Antioch, who led the church while John was still alive in Ephesus, and undoubtedly was influenced by him, wrote—before his martyrdom in 110 AD—about Christians who “Have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord’s Day.” While some now try to claim that he instituted Sunday worship on his own, and the church sheepishly fell in line and rejected the (supposed) instructions of the apostles to keep the Sabbath, the view is utterly preposterous, since the fact that many groups of Gentile believers throughout the Roman world—who would have stayed faithful to apostolic tradition—would have fought against this and denounced the practice. Yet this did not happen, and no—repeat, no—condemnation regarding Sunday observance can be found in any Christian writings throughout the 2nd century, a fact impossible to dismiss. Justin Martyr (First Apology 67) actually *acknowledged* Sunday worship and the taking of Communion*:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn;

and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the Day of the Sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, he taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.

* The 3rd century *Didascalia* does likewise, and even asserts the Sunday system was ‘appointed by the apostles.’

Now it is true that some ancient Christian churches for centuries had *dual* days of worship--Saturday *and* Sunday--and that Paul (Romans 14:5) himself acknowledged that some Christians of his time still kept the Sabbath as their worship day, while others made no distinction. But the same Paul, in verse 10, went on to forbid judging a brother on this issue. Yet *that* verse is universally ignored by Sabbatarians, who regularly condemn the Sunday Christian as following Catholic heresy!

It must also be acknowledged that while some ancient Christian churches either were full-out Sabbatarian, or else worshipped on both days, no Patristic writers ever declared Sabbath observance either mandatory or a salvation issue--unlike the typical modern Sabbatarian who upholds both notions!

However, even some ancient *Jewish* Christians worshipped on Sunday, for the Romans supposedly allowed the Christian Jews to remain in Jerusalem after its fall because they had intentionally moved their Sabbath to Sunday to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews, who rebelled against Rome and brought about their own destruction. (Source: the History Channel®.)

Thus, we can find no proof, outside the modern-day Judaizer's misinterpretation of the New Testament, that Gentile believers in the churches overseen by Paul kept things like the Jewish Sabbath and Festivals, or that Paul taught they should. Is that because they are “bad” to observe?

No. Paul attacked the whole idea because the Gentiles were being told by Judaising Messianics that they *had* to keep Mosaic Law or they would not be saved, and so they were placing their security in the fact they were obeying those commandments, and thus were assured of eternal life for that reason--something many Sabbatarians effectively still believe when it comes to the Sabbath!

The situation would be akin to an evangelical misreading the Old Testament and letting his beard grow wild in the fear he will die unsaved if he does not obey the commandment not to trim the corners of one's beard. The man clearly does not understand the basis of what salvation is, and his practice--while not problematic in and of itself--indicates a deep spiritual problem simply because he has no requirement to obey that Old Testament command, and if he *is* observing it, we must ask why he is. If he's doing it because he thinks he has to in order to be saved, or to keep from being sent to hell, he is in desperate need of correction and instruction regarding justification and righteousness! Even the simple act of physical circumcision--a good thing otherwise--if done because one has been threatened with damnation if he doesn't obey that commandment, renders Christ of no value to a man who does so in obedience to what Genesis 17 even says is an “**everlasting covenant**” (Gal. 5:2)!*

We also cannot ignore the fact that Sabbath-keeping is the most intricate of all Old Testament commands because of its extremely strict requirements for rest that forbid cooking, carrying anything (which could include a Bible), starting a fire, or traveling more than a few thousand yards (thus meaning no driving to church in a gas-powered car), to name a few--along with not working for one full year out of seven if one is a farmer. The penalty for violating these commands is death, so where in the New Testament are the instructions to the ignorant Gentiles raised outside of Judaism on how one keeps the Sabbath commands in the proper way to be pleasing to God? There are none, and anyone should be able to understand the implication that they were not mandated to observe the Sabbath at all, because one cannot observe it without intense instruction on *how* to observe it, and what should be done with believers who fail--willingly or unwillingly--to measure up to the mandated Scriptural requirements *of* the Sabbath. You see, observing the biblical Sabbath is far more than toning one's activities down, focusing on God, and going to church on Saturday! So does that mean the Sabbath has no importance for Christianity? No. Its spiritual implications are critical for us to understand, and the principle of setting aside at least one day in seven for the worship of God, in a corporate sense, are critical to the survival of the church. The error is to elevate the Old Testament commandment above the message that it means to teach, which is that by not so much as the slightest effort on man's part can he earn or contribute to what God is willing to give freely.

Once that is understood, what one does with the idea of the Sabbath is between him and God. But to hold the view that the keeping and observance of the Sabbath is mandatory, is equally heretical with requiring converts to undergo physical circumcision, and has the same results: “**Christ will profit you nothing**”!

Finally, for those deceived individuals who think the apostles taught that the Christians must keep the Sabbath, here is the sum total of the verses written by Paul, James, John, Peter and Jude using the word *Sabbath*. This is literally every time the word *Sabbath* appears in the New Testament after the Book of Acts, from Romans to Revelation:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Col. 2:16-17.

* Meanwhile, those who try to hold onto the Law with one hand and grace with the other, claiming that physical circumcision is irrelevant to walking in the Torah and observing the Festivals in God's eyes because circumcision of the *heart* is what counts, need to read the words of God on the necessity for a Gentile in the dispensation of Mosaic Law to be both spiritually *and* physically circumcised: “**Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel**” Ez. 44:9.

4. “**Labor**” is better translated as: “**Endeavor**” or “**be zealous**.”

5. This is one of very few places in the New Testament where the term “**Word of God**” may be employed as a euphemism for the Scriptures, although the writer may still be using it to refer to God's decree.

6. There is a lot of controversy over what it means when it says that Jesus was tempted in the same ways we are. Some believe that since Jesus is God, and since God cannot sin, the temptations Christ underwent held no attraction for him, and thus there was no real battle within Him to resist them. That may sound nice, but some of the commandments Christ had to obey were to fast, and--since Jesus was fully human--He had to consciously resist the desire of His flesh to take nourishment when He hungered. Thus, we can assume that Jesus did have to exercise a conscious will to deny at least *some* sin (that of breaking a fast from hunger). Beyond that, we can't know to what degree Jesus had to fight His own human flesh to obey God. It is almost a certainty that He had to deny His flesh more than some theologians think.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 5

1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:¹
 2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.
 3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.
 4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.
 5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.
 6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
 7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;
 8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;
 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;
 10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.
 11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.
 12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.²
 13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.
 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 5

1 For every human High Priest is ordained to function before God on behalf of his fellow human men, so that he can offer both gifts and sacrifices for their sins.
 2 He can [strike a balance between condemnation and mercy] toward those who do not have full knowledge of the things they should do, while understanding the failings of other men who do know the truth but stray from the path every so often, seeing as he is a fallible human being himself.
 3 That is why he needs to make sacrifices for *his* sins, as well as those of the rest of the Jewish people.
 4 And no man has the right to take this honor to himself--only someone God calls may do so, as was the case with the first High Priest, Aaron.
 5 So also Christ did not exalt himself up to be mankind's High Priest--*God* gave him that position when He said: **Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.**
 6 God reiterated this in another verse of Scripture: **Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.**
 7 Now Jesus, when he walked on the earth as a human man, offered up prayers and desperate requests with weeping and tears to God, who was able to preserve him through the death process. And God heard him because of his reverential fear.
 8 And even though he was a Son, he learned what it is to obey by the things he suffered.
 9 And being made perfect [by obeying unto suffering], he became the agent of eternal salvation to all who likewise obey *him*.
 10 Thus, he was called of God to the rank of High priest "**after the order of Melchizedek**."
 11 Now we would love to go into deeper detail about all this and unravel some of the wonderful mysteries on the subject--but we can't because of your laziness in hearing.
 12 For even though by now you should be teaching others the mysteries of the Gospel, you have need of someone again teaching *you* the foundations of God's revelations! The fact is, you need milk, and not solid food.
 13 And everyone who still needs milk lacks any in-depth knowledge of the doctrine of righteousness, because he is merely a baby Christian.
 14 Strong meat, meanwhile, goes to grown men--those who, by their maturity, have their senses attuned to discern good and evil [and truth and error].

1. Chapter 5 now turns to exalting Christ as the final and ultimate High Priest of God.

2. It is interesting to note that the writer is irritated that his educated Jewish audience seems as naive as the Gentiles in Corinth, and apparently need to be re-educated in the fundamentals of the faith when they should be advancing in deeper knowledge.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 6

1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,
 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.¹
 3 And this will we do, if God permit.
 4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,
 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son

HEBREWS CHAPTER 6

1 Therefore, leaving the elementary principles of the Christian faith, let us go on to maturity, not reiterating the fundamentals of: Repentance from the dead works [of sin and legalistic Torah observance]; and faith toward God.
 2 Doctrines about immersions. Laying on of hands [for the baptism of the Spirit or ordination to ministry]. The resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.
 3 And this we will do, if God permits.
 4-6 For it is impossible to renew to repentance those others who once knew the truth about Christ, tasting the heavenly gift, and partaking of the Holy Spirit, who have also sampled the good Message of God and the power of the Messianic Age to come, and who, despite this, have [renounced Christ in order to return to the Jewish community and its sacrificial system]. Those who have

of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.²
 7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:
 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.
 9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.
 10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.
 11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:
 12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.
 13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself;
 14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.
 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.
 16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.
 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:
 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:
 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;
 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.³

done this have crucified the Son of God again, and put him to a public shame [by their public repudiation of him].
 7 For the ground that drinks in the rain as often as it falls upon it, and sprouts herbs that are useful for the planters, displays that it is a ground that has received blessing from God.
 8 But ground that produces thorns and thistles might wind up as cursed ground, and be burned bare in the end.
 9 But, beloved, we are certain we can expect better from you, including the fruits that accompany salvation, though we speak like this to you.
 10 For God is not unrighteous, forgetting the work and labor of love you have displayed in His name by ministering, and continuing to minister, to the righteous.
 11-12 Our hope is that all of you will continue to walk in the same diligence to the end, so your confidence will remain sure, and you do not fall into apathy, but instead imitate those who, by faith and patience, inherit the promises.
 13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, swearing by Himself since there was no one greater that He could swear by,
 14 He said: **Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.**
 15 And so after *Abraham* had patiently endured, he laid hold of the promise.
 16 For men making oaths swear by something or Someone greater than themselves to assure what they are going to do, and invoking such an oath settles the debate.
 17-18 So then God, even more desirous of showing those in line to inherit His promise how unbreakable His decision was, confirmed it by an oath, so that by two unalterable factors from a God who cannot lie [--a promise and an oath--] we, who have *fled to Him for refuge*, might have absolute assurance of the hope set before us.
 19-20 This hope--this absolute guarantee to our soul--is fixed like an anchor whose chain stretches beyond the veil into the very Holy of Holies, where it is secure in our forerunner who is already there: namely Jesus, who has been made *A High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek*.

1. Verses 1 and 2 here are two of the most important verses in the New Testament. Yet they are passed over by most of Christianity. What makes them important is that the writer has just listed what *he* considers to be the elementary principles of the Faith:

1. *Repentance from dead works* (i.e., sin--or perhaps a reference to legalistic Torah observance).
2. *Faith in God through Messiah.*
3. *Doctrines regarding the implications, types and shadows of both spiritual and physical baptisms.*
4. *The ordination of elders and ecclesiastical authority through the laying on of hands.*
5. *The coming resurrection of all humanity.*
6. *Eternal life with, or separated from, God.*

2. Here, we have some verses that have caused a great deal of misunderstanding because they are usually interpreted through a Gentile mindset. The writer is *not* talking about Christians who have come to Christ and then backslid and turned back to sin! He is talking about Christian Jews who, after facing persecution, have returned to the Jewish synagogue and system of animal sacrifice! In the time this work was written, a man who did this had to publicly renounce Christ in front of the entire synagogue * before he was received back into the Jewish community. This is how these people put '**Christ to open shame**'-- by publicly denouncing Him (see Luke 12:9), something that still happens today when some Messianics return to Orthodox Judaism.

* This still happens today on occasion when converts from Judaism or Islam return to the synagogue or mosque.

3. Noting that the writer has warned against returning to the Christ-rejecting form of Judaism, he concludes by pointing out the true and greatest High Priest of the faith is Christ, who has transcended the earthly Temple to dwell in the heavenly fullness of God's presence. Thus, the fact that the Christians are excluded from the Jewish synagogues and Temple is irrelevant since these were but shadows of the ultimate fulfillment.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 7

1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God,¹ who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;
 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;
 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.²
 4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.
 5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:
 6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.
 7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.³
 8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.
 9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.⁴
 10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.
 11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?⁵
 12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.⁶
 13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.
 14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.
 15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,
 16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.⁷
 17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
 18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.⁸
 19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.
 20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he

HEBREWS CHAPTER 7

1 For this priest of God Most High--Melchizedek--was king of Salem [the early Jerusalem], and met Abraham when he was returning from the Slaughter of the Kings, and blessed him.
 2 Abraham also gave a tithe of 10% of what he had taken to this man, whose name means *King of Righteousness*, and who also [had the title of] *King of Salem*, which means, *King of Peace*.
 3 He had no recorded parents, nor descendants [to inherit his office], nor is there a record of when he began his ministry or when he ended it, so--prefiguring the Son of God--he is considered to be a priest that ministers perpetually [since no one can prove that he ever died].
 4 Consider how important this man was that even the Patriarch Abraham tithed 10% of the captured valuables to him!
 5 And truly, those descended from Levi, who hold the office of priests, are commanded to receive tithes from the people as the Torah says--even from their own brothers, despite their all equally being the descendants of Abraham.
 6 But this Melchizedek, who had no descent through the Levitical line of priests, received tithes from Abraham, and pronounced a blessing *upon* Abraham, who had received God's promises before this event.
 7 Now we absolutely know that only someone of superior rank can pronounce a blessing on someone else [who must be of lesser rank].
 8 And here, in this life, men who will eventually die receive tithes. But it is attested to that back then, a man who *never* died--and still lives--received tithes!
 9-10 And I might point out that [the tribe of] Levi which would, in due course, receive tithes [through the Levitical priesthood,] in a sense *rendered* tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham. [Thus, both the head of the tribe of Levi, and the priests that would descend from him, acknowledged that Melchizedek held a superior rank and priesthood.] For Levi [and the Levites] were still in the loins of their ancestor Abraham when Melchizedek met him [and Abraham delivered the tithe in both his and their name].
 11 So then, if perfection came through the *Levitical* priesthood--for under that priesthood the people received the Torah--why was it necessary that a subsequent prophecy be made in the Psalms that another priest would arise who would be **after the order of Melchizedek**, rather than Aaron?
 12-14 Since the Aaronic priesthood would be abrogated through this prophecy, it only follows that the Torah itself [which cannot be altered in any way if it is in force] would likewise have to be abrogated. For the one prophesied to become this priest--Jesus--clearly "branched" from the tribe of Judah, a tribe that never produced any priest that ministered at the altar, and which Moses in the Torah said nothing about with regard to the priesthood.
 15-16 This [prophetic abrogation of the Torah in favor of a New covenant] is far more evident given the fact that this Melchizedekal priest would arise and be appointed, not through Torah commands that mandate descent from Levi, a dead Patriarch--but outside that requirement because *he* would have the power of an *everlasting life*! [Thus, the whole Torah system could not do other than become moot and pass into history when he arrived with his superior everlasting priesthood!]
 17 For remember God testified about *this* immortal priest: **Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec**.
 18 And so the commandments of the Torah in force before this priest arrived were disannulled because they were imperfect and unprofitable [as the mortal priests they pertained to likewise were].
 19 For the covenant of the Torah perfected no one, but the

was made priest:

21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

institution of something much better to place our confidence in [—Christ and *his* priesthood and covenant—] *did*, by whom we draw near to God!

20 And [unlike other priests], he became a priest through an oath!

21 For Levitical priests were made without an oath—but Christ was made a priest *through* an oath: **The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.**

22 The fact that Jesus was appointed by a [prophetic] oath makes him the guarantor of a better covenant [compared to that of the Torah and its Levitical priesthood].

23 And there were truly many High Priests over the centuries, because they had to pass their offices down to others because [as mortal men] they eventually died.

24 But this man, because he is alive forever, therefore has a priesthood that will *never* come to an end!

25 Therefore, he is able to absolutely save those who come to God *through* him since he is perpetually living to intercede for them.

26 And this is the perfect sort of High Priest for us: One who is holy, blameless, undefiled—distinct from sinners—and exalted higher than the highest heavens!

27 And he does not need [—like Levitical High Priests—] to offer a daily sacrifice for his own sins first, and then those of the people, for he did this one time when he offered up himself [as a sacrifice].

28 For the Torah outlines the way to make fallible human men High Priests—but the decree contained in the oath, which was enacted long after the Torah was given, superseded the Torah by consecrating the Son High Priest—a Son who is made perfect *forever*!

1. Interestingly, the writer is fascinated with the relationship between Melchizedek * and Messiah, and returns to the constant theme of how Christ's priesthood is superior to that of the Aaronic.

* Who may have been Shem, the son of Noah, according to some Jewish traditions. However, since Melchizedek is given the title of *King of Righteousness* (his title, *Melek Tzaddik* or *Melki-Tzedek*, actually means that), it seems probable that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, since only Christ Himself would be considered worthy to be called the *King of Righteousness*. The DSS (11Q13) also call him *Elohim*—a name for God—and speak of him as the ultimate agent to atone for Israel's sin!

2. The writer now slips into the metaphysical by pointing out that since there is no record of Melchizedek's ever dying, he can be considered to have remained a priest perpetually, without passing the office down to his descendants. That may not sound logical to a Western mind, but it is perfectly Semitic in thought. Additionally, his priesthood—which predated the Aaronic—in the writer's view has always been superior to that later priesthood (see verse 6), and *has always existed independently from the Aaronic priesthood*! This fact is also the final nail in the coffin to those who mistakenly believe Christ will return to re-institute a Torah-based system, including a Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priesthood with its Levitical Temple is forever dead, and only the Melchizedekal priesthood made up of Christ and all believers will function in the Millennial Kingdom.

3. The writer is pointing out that, as key a figure as Abraham was, he was inferior to Melchizedek who blessed *him*, rather than the other way around. In the same way, Christ—though descended from Abraham—is greater than Abraham.

4. Again turning metaphysical, the writer expresses a Semitic view that time is like a garment, and that one could lift up a thread of it, representing an act on a specific date, the effects of which would ripple all the way back to the beginning of time, and all the way forward to the end of time. That makes no sense to us, of course, but that's how *they* thought. This is the rationale of how the writer can claim that Levi paid tithes through Abraham, since Abraham's act of righteousness extended down through the ages and his descendants. This is also how Messiah's atoning sacrifice in 30 or 33 AD was applied both backwards and forward in time, and explains the basis on which God was *ever* able to forgive sin before Christ came. This, and the following verse, is also a perfect example of Paul's cramming about three paragraphs of major metaphysical theology into just one sentence, which has required the author to greatly expand the paraphrase to explain the full implications of what he is saying.

5. Again, the writer makes the point that there has always been a "better" priesthood and covenant in the shadows that was manifested in Christ.

6. A problematic verse for some extremist Messianics who like to seize on Christ's words that "**not one jot or tittle will pass from the Law.**" As shown here, the Law has indeed changed!

7. As noted earlier, the writer believed Melchizedek was a type and shadow for an eternal priest and priesthood.

8. Continuing on with his constant theme, the writer again states that the Law has been overturned by something better which could accomplish what the first Torah could not: bring people into true right standing with God.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 8

1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum:¹ We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;
 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.
 3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.
 4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:
 5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.²
 6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.
 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.³
 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:
 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:
 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.
 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.
 13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.⁴

HEBREWS CHAPTER 8

1 All right--so this is the sum of what we have been saying: We have a High Priest like this who is set on the right hand of God's throne of Majesty in the heavens,
 2 Who officiates in the true [heavenly] Holy Place and tabernacle that God--not man--erected.
 3 For since every High Priest is ordained to continually offer gifts and sacrifices, it was necessary that *this* High Priest also provide something [but for a *one-time* offering].
 4 For if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, seeing that there are currently priests here who offer up gifts as the Torah requires.
 5 But these priests [and their sacrifices] are doing nothing more than showing an example of what goes on and exists in heaven, just as Moses--when he was about to build the first tabernacle--was admonished: "See," God said, "**that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.**"
 6 But now Christ has been given a vastly superior ministry, by which he is the mediator of a [vastly] superior covenant, which was established on [vastly] better promises [than those of the Torah].
 7 For if the first covenant [--the Torah--] had been perfect, there would be no need of instituting a second covenant [to supersede it].
 8 But God--finding fault with the *people*--said: **Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a New covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:**
 9 **Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.**
 10 **For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:**
 11 **And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.**
 12 **For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.**
 13 By virtue of the fact God used the words, "A New covenant," it is obvious that He made the *first* covenant old [and obsolete]. And that which decays and grows old is now ready to vanish away completely.

1. Chapter 8 sums up all the writer has been teaching.

2. Judaism accepted that the tent in the wilderness, and the items associated with it, represented greater things that actually existed in heaven. As the writer concludes, since Christ ministers in the heavenly Temple, the earthly Temple with its sacrifices and priesthood can never be considered on par or superior to it.

3. A statement that is anathema to rabbinic Jews and some Messianics who simply refuse to believe that the first covenant of the Torah has been replaced with something better.

4. The writer is not limiting himself--as some, faced with these problematic verses assert--to the Temple and its sacrifices. He is stating that the Mosaic covenant itself is about to end once the Temple is destroyed. From that point, it will be absolutely impossible to keep the Torah. One might keep parts of it, but as Paul points out in Gal. 3:10: "**Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.**"

Those who thus think they are keeping the commandments because they observe the 180 or so commandments of the Torah that could still apply without a Temple are simply deceiving themselves. They are not keeping *the* commandments. They are keeping *some* commandments. And keeping some commandments is no different in God's eyes than keeping *no* commandments so far as His approval on one's life apart from Christ's righteousness is concerned.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 9

1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.
 2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.
 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;
 4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;
 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.¹
 6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.
 7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:
 8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:
 9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;
 10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.
 11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;
 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place,² having obtained eternal redemption for us.
 13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:
 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal³ Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
 16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.⁴
 17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.
 18 Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.
 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the

HEBREWS CHAPTER 9

1 Now the first covenant also had ordinances of divine service, along with an earthly sanctuary [in the wilderness].
 2 For in that time they fashioned a Tent Tabernacle, which had within its first compartment the menorah, the table, and the *shewbread*. This was called the *Holy Place*.
 3 Beyond that compartment, past the second curtain, was the part of the tent called the *Holy of Holies*.
 4 In there was the golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant, overlaid with gold, that contained the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.
 5 And atop the ark were the two cherubim of glory overshadowing the Mercy Seat, which we won't go into detail about at this time.
 6 Now the system being structured in this manner requires the Levitical priests to always stay within the first part of the tent as they perform their ministerial duties to God.
 7 But once a year, the High Priest goes alone into the second part of the tabernacle--and he enters with the blood from a sacrifice, which he then offers up for the *unintentional* sins of both himself and the Jewish people.
 8 The Holy Spirit by this was illustrating that the way into the Holy of Holies was not yet open [to all men], and *would* not be while the first tabernacle [and its system] was still in place.
 9-10 This whole system represents what has been in place down to our own time, in which the sacrificial gifts and offerings that are made can never make the High Priest offering them up truly perfect [and acceptable in God's eyes], for his [sinful nature] can never really be made pure under a system that deals only with ritual meats, drinks, immersions, and carnal commandments made for regulating life until the time of reformation arrives.
 11 But then Christ came on the scene as a High Priest who was a fulfillment of the good things to come; and he entered a greater and more perfect Temple that was not built by human hands, and not an earthly tabernacle.
 12 And he did not enter this [heavenly] Temple bearing the blood of bulls and calves, but he entered the Holy Place [in heaven] one time with *his own* blood, having obtained everlasting redemption for us [through it]!
 13-14 For if the blood of earthly bulls, goats, and the ashes of a red heifer, sprinkling unclean men, made them sanctified and purified them outwardly in the *flesh* [to minister to God as priests in the earthly Temple], how much more shall the blood of Christ--who, through the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit, lived his life in a state of perfect sanctification to God before offering himself up as the ultimate sacrifice--purge your *inner* man from its propensity to sinful acts so that you can minister as priests to the living God [in a positional state of purity even *greater* than that of a Jewish High Priest]?!
 15 And this is why Jesus is the mediator of this *New* covenant, that by means of dying for the redemption of [even *intentional*] transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
 16 For where there is a will [listing an inheritance], obviously the person writing the will must die for the inheritance to be given.
 17 For a will applies only after the writer is dead, and before that it has no force.
 18 Thus, even the first covenant was inaugurated through shed blood.
 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept in the Torah to

blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,
 20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.
 21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.
 22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.⁵
 23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.
 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;
 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.⁶

all the people, he took the blood of calves [and goats], with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll of the Torah and all the people,
 20 Saying: **This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.**
 21 Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels within it that were used for purposes of ministry.
 22 And almost all things, according to the Torah, are ritually cleansed with blood--and without the shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin and impurity].
 23 And so it was therefore necessary that copies of the things in the heavens [--shown in pattern by the earthly tabernacle--] had to be purified by things such as these. However, the heavenly things themselves had to be purified with much better sacrifices than those of earthly animals.
 24 Thus, Christ [--the blood-bearer--] did not enter into the Temple and its Holy Places that were made with human hands, which are mere representations of the true things in heaven. Instead, he bypassed them and entered directly into the tabernacle in heaven itself so that he should always be in the direct presence of God [interceding] for us.
 25-26 He also does not have to continually sacrifice himself in the way an earthly High Priest must make a yearly sacrifice during *Yom Kippur* with the blood of animals, for otherwise he would have had to suffer perpetually, throughout time. But now, at the end of the Age, he has come to take away sin by sacrificing himself.
 27-28 And just as it is appointed to men to die once, and after that face judgment, so Christ was offered up one time to bear the sins of the many of us--and to those who wait expectantly for him shall he appear the second time, not to deal with sin, but to take away all repercussions of sin as the final fruit of salvation.

1. Those who think the Ark of the Covenant will be found and placed in a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem should read Jeremiah 3:16.

2. While some (reasonably) tie this verse to John 2:21 and 2 Cor. 5:2, considering the "Temple" to be Christ's body, verse 12 and Heb. 8:2, suggest this verse actually refers to the heavenly Temple the Jews believed Moses was shown.

3. "Eternal Spirit" is probably the wrong understanding of this verse. Some ancient texts read "Holy Spirit," and the author is among those who prefer that rendering. While "Eternal Spirit" can theoretically refer to the Holy Spirit, many theologians view the term as a reference to Christ's own perfect spirit, and not the Holy Spirit. (A similar debate occurs over Rom. 1:4.) However, some hold that both verses refer to the Holy Spirit, and would go on to give credit to the Spirit for Christ's ability not only to work miracles, but also His empowerment of sanctification (Isaiah 7:16), which would tie in with Paul's many admonitions to Christians to make the choice to walk in the Spirit in order to follow God. (Others would simply say that since Jesus is God, and since God cannot sin, that Jesus was perfectly sanctified because He was God, and thus the Spirit played no part in that sanctification. The truth may or may not be in between both views.) The reader will also note that I have been very liberal in my paraphrasing of verses 13 and 14. This is necessary because the writer's full impact cannot be seen clearly without expanding the paraphrase to bring out the awesome implications behind what he is saying. Verses 7-10 have been contrasting inferior human High Priests with Christ, the ultimate High Priest (verse 11). In verses 13 and 14, the writer is continuing his discussion about these human priests, pointing out that the ashes of the red heifer, which were sprinkled daily on the "unclean" High Priests to make them ritually clean for Temple service, pale in comparison to the Holy Spirit-sanctified blood of Jesus Christ which has an *infinite* cleansing potential compared to the blood and ashes of simple animals! The sanctifying power of *this* divine blood, the writer points out, applies to the believers in Christ, and thus places them in a state of sanctification infinitely superior to that of even the Jewish High Priest, the only man on earth who otherwise is rendered pure through animal sacrifice to serve in the direct presence of God in the Temple. Likewise, this divine blood's sanctifying power extends beyond simply purifying the flesh from the contamination of sin and uncleanness--it purifies the inner man from the fallen nature of humanity itself, a state which the High Priest can never reach through any sacrifice in the Law or through his own obedience to the Law.

4. The writer here is referring to the fact that to obtain the inheritance Christ has promised, He had to first die to enact the testament.

5. Many Christians make the mistake of thinking from this verse that blood sacrifice is the only form of atonement God will accept, and then they go on to declare to Jews that this shows they have no means of atoning for sin. The problem with this is that while it is true that blood was given for atonement, and while it is Christ's blood that accomplished the final and ultimate atonement, the Old Testament did provide for a number of substitutes to atone for wrongdoing apart from blood sacrifice. Here are some examples.

Restitution (Numbers 5:8)

Jewelry (Num. 31:50)

Flour (Lev. 5:11)

Money (Exodus 30:15)

The Old Testament is replete with instances where God forgave a man on the basis of his repentance without his offering up a blood

sacrifice. (David's *intentional transgression* of murdering Uriah is a good example.) Jews will point to this and say that this proves blood sacrifice is unnecessary for atonement, and thus they do not need Christ's blood to atone for their sins—they must only repent. The problem is, God *will* only forgive sin on the basis of Messiah's atoning sacrifice. As we saw in earlier chapters, that one sacrifice in 30 or 33 AD, in the Semitic mindset, extends all the way back, and all the way forward, in time. Likewise, its efficacy applies throughout all time. Thus, while God forgave David's otherwise unforgivable sin (there is no atonement for murder provided for in the Torah), it was not because David repented and God just chose to forgive; it was because of Messiah's sacrifice for all sin that was applied to David's sin through God's grace. The Old Testament may not explain that in microscopic detail, leaving Jews with the impression that no blood sacrifice is needed for atonement (since they reject the New Testament which *does* explain these things), but what the writer says here is true: only blood *can* atone for *all* consequences of sin.

Many people miss the fact that there are also two consequences for sin: Temporal and eternal. God forgave the temporal repercussions of the sins of Nineveh because the city repented—but that does not necessarily mean that the people would automatically now be the people of God, in full right standing with Him. Assuming they continued to worship false gods, they would have died and gone to hell in the end. But the temporal consequences of their sin for the present were definitely overturned because of their repentance, and the city was spared for one more generation. (They went downhill from there, and Nineveh was destroyed around a century later in 612 BC.)

Likewise with us, when the New Testament says God chastises or judges us for our sins, it is not talking about eternal punishment in hell—it is talking about temporal punishment on earth. Such temporal punishment can indeed be averted by our repentance, just as it could be averted in Old Testament times by repentance—but only through blood are the *eternal* consequences of sin averted! Thus, while God can, and does, remit the temporal consequences of sin based on what a man does, the eternal consequences can never be washed away except with the blood of the one true sacrifice on the cross.

6. The writer's meaning in this verse is a bit difficult to paraphrase.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 10

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.
 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.¹
 3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.
 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.²
 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:
 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.
 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.
 8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;
 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.³
 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:
 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;
 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.
 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.⁴
 15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,
 16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws

HEBREWS CHAPTER 10

1 For the Torah, being as it was only a foreshadowing of things to come, and not the full image of what *was* coming, could never—with the yearly sacrifices contained *within* it for those who come to God *through* it—make men into what God wants them to be, which is perfect.
 2 Otherwise, why must the same sacrifices have to be made continually? The worshippers, once purged of sin, should logically have been made free from their [fallen natures], and sinned no more.
 3 But those yearly sacrifices remind us that the people are obviously caught up in a cycle of continuous sin.
 4 For it is not possible that the blood of *bulls and goats* could wipe the sin debt clean!
 5 That is why, when Jesus came into the world, he said:
Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a *body* hast thou prepared me:
 6 **In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.**
 7 **Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.**
 8 Note that he first said, **Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein**—and this referred to the animals proscribed for offerings by the Torah!
 9 Then he said, **Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.** So God took away the first system [of animal sacrifice] so that He could establish the second,
 10 By which, in this '*will of God*,' we are sanctified perpetually through the sacrificial offering of the body of *Jesus Christ*!
 11 Now every [Levitical] priest daily performs his ministerial duties, some of which include enacting the same animal sacrifices, which can never [perfect people and] remove sins [and sinning] from them.
 12 But the man Jesus, after he had offered one sacrifice to deal with sin forever, [ended the work with that, and thus] sat down at the right hand of God,
 13 Where he is waiting expectantly, **till his enemies be made his footstool.**
 14 By one sacrificial offering, *he* has forever perfected [—and broken the power of sin—] in those who are being

into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;
 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.
 18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.
 19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,
 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;
 21 And having an high priest over the house of God;
 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,⁵ and our bodies washed with pure water.
 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith⁶ without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)
 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:
 25 Not forsaking the assembling⁷ of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.
 26 For if we sin wilfully⁸ after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,
 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.
 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:
 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?
 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.
 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
 32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;
 33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.
 34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.
 35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.
 36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.
 37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.
 38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.
 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto

sanctified!

15 The Holy Spirit also witnesses to us about this, for He said in the Scriptures:

16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

18 Now where sins and iniquities have totally been remitted, there is no further need for sacrificial offerings.

19-22 Therefore, brethren, since we have the boldness to enter the [true] Holy of Holies through the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which he has opened for us through the curtain of *his* flesh--and since we have a High Priest over the Temple of God [in heaven]--let us come near with sincere hearts in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [and cleansed] from our evil [fallen nature], and our bodies immersed in pure water.

23 Let us hold fast to the profession of our confidence without wavering, for He who promised us is faithful.

24 And let us inspire each other to love and good deeds,

25 Not forsaking our synagogues, as is the habit of some; but exhorting one another even more as we see Judgment Day approaching.

26 For if we [scorn repentance and] keep on sinning after we have known the truth, no sacrifice can save us from our sins!

27 All we can fearfully look forward to is the *judgment and fiery indignation* that will devour the adversaries.

28 [Remember that] a person who scorned the Law of Moses died without mercy at the word of two or three witnesses.

29 So how much greater punishment do you suppose that a man would deserve, who trampled down the Son of God, considering the blood of the covenant that sanctified him an unholy thing, and thereby insulting the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know Him who said: **Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.** And also: **The Lord shall judge his people.**

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

32-33 So keep in mind the early days when you first came to enlightenment, and endured many hard afflictions against you at times when you were publicly singled out for reproach and affliction, either for yourselves or for other members of the Messianic community with whom you stood.

34 Back then, you had compassion for the imprisoned, and joyfully endured your goods being stripped from you [for your faith], knowing in yourselves that in heaven you have a much greater--and eternal--reward coming.

35 So do not cast away your confidence, which will obtain for you a great reward [for the persecution you're enduring in this life].

36 For you have need of patience, so that after you have done God's will, you can receive the promise.

37 For in a little while he who is coming shall come, and he will not delay.

38 Now [there is a verse that talks about escaping the coming judgment--through faith--that reads], **the just shall live by faith.** [But remember it goes on to say...] **but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.**

39 But we are *not* among those who draw back to perdition;

perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

we are in the group who believe [and press onward] to the saving of the soul!

1. The writer here is developing a point made in Romans 3:31, which states that the Law, because of mankind's weakness, is not voided through faith, but through faith the true purpose of the Law is accomplished: making man righteous in God's sight (through the imputed righteousness of Christ). "**Conscience**" refers to man's guilt and awareness of sin, but also the natural inclination from his fallen nature to think wrongly, which impels him to sin. (We know this through verses 1-3, and 14 and 16, which do not refer to atonement, justification and the removal of sin-guilt, but which note the sanctifying power of the Spirit, which conforms us into the image of Christ, with obviously renewed minds that now *naturally* cause us to think differently from our previous fallen state.)
2. As noted in the last chapter, only the atonement of Christ actually wiped the slate clean; the Old Testament sacrifices merely pointed to the coming sacrifice of Messiah as early as Abraham's offering up Isaac as a sacrifice.
3. The writer is now flat-out saying that the Jewish sacrificial system has fulfilled its purpose in pointing to Messiah, so it now has no efficacy whatsoever because God has moved beyond it.
4. Right here, we have the acknowledgment that Christ's one sacrifice has forever accomplished the atonement for sin. This is why the blood of Christ covers all our sins--past, present, and even future--so long as we accept that blessing by faith, and refuse to accept sin as a substitute for it!
5. "**Evil conscience**" could be understood as the natural human inclination to think and act at variance with God's way of doing things, resulting in wrong motivations, and sin. This, of course, comes out of mankind's sinful nature, and so the paraphrase uses the term *fallen nature* in this verse to help explain what the writer means, although the biblical text may be limiting itself to wrong thinking, and the sin and guilt that arises from it. Through our faith in the sacrifice of Christ, the writer points out, our minds have been renewed, and the sins enveloping us have been washed away, and thus we can approach the Father in full confidence, freed from both our ungodly way of thinking, and the guilty conscience that accompanies our sins, which have been wiped away through the cross.
6. "**Faith**" here is not the usual word for believing and trusting, but rather means our "**confidence**."
7. The word for "**assembling**" should be translated: "**Synagogue**."
8. Some illiterates view this verse as talking about committing any single intentional sin after salvation. Once that happens, salvation is lost in their view. These fools miss the fact that the Greek actually means to *continually* walk in a willful, unrepentant serious sin, not to commit a single *act* of sin. In fact, we see the man walking in ongoing incest with his stepmother in 1st Corinthians given over to having his life taken from him so that his spirit could be *saved* in eternity--not lost! Clearly, his sin was serious, willful and ongoing, yet Paul felt it had not reached a point where the man had lost his salvation altogether--but *could* have if left unchecked. But what is the actual context spoken of here? Verses 29-39 *might* be placing this in the context of abandoning the faith because of persecution and returning to Judaism (definitely talked about in Hebrews 6), which required publicly renouncing Christ before the assembled synagogue. This would mean it would be to "**sin willfully**" by '*trodding under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing*' by publicly renouncing Christ and returning to the synagogue and animal sacrifice. Animal sacrifices did not cover willful sin--only unintentional sin--so it is theoretically possible the writer refers to those relying on Old covenant animal sacrifice as some were returning to under pressure. He would be reiterating those returning to the Old covenant would be committing the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Spirit of grace and repudiating Christ, and would have no atonement for it if they were going back to animal sacrifice since the man would know he was rejecting the truth when he left, and none of those sacrifices could cover his sins. If not, then he is saying that a Gospel without repentance--or at least an honest struggle at repentance--is no real conversion.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 11

- 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.¹
- 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.
- 3 Through faith² we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.
- 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.
- 5 By faith Enoch was translated³ that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.
- 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
- 7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 11

- 1 Now faith is a most sure warrant, a being of things hoped for, a demonstration of things not seen.
- 2 For it was by faith that the elders secured a good commendation [from God].
- 3 Because of our faith, we understand that the entire universe was created by God's spoken command, and that the things that we see came to be out of absolutely nothing.
- 4 By faith, Abel offered up to God a more appropriate and pleasing sacrifice than Cain, testifying to the fact that he was righteous, because God testified of his gift offerings. And even though he is long dead, his example [of being the first human ever placing faith in the blood sacrifice of an unblemished sacrificial lamb] still speaks volumes to us!
- 5 Because Enoch had faith, he was taken elsewhere so that he would not die; *but he simply vanished because God snatched him away*. But before his translation, he had a testimony that he pleased God [because of his faith].
- 6 But without faith, it is utterly impossible to please God in any way, for he who comes to God must believe God is real, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him diligently.
- 7 Because he believed what he had been told, Noah--after being warned by God of things coming that he did not see happening yet, and which had never happened before--was moved with fear to build an ark that wound up saving his entire household. His obedience in doing this sealed the fate of

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.
 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac, and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:
 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.
 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed,⁴ and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.
 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.
 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.
 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.⁵
 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.
 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,
 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:
 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.⁶
 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.
 21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.
 22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.
 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.
 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;
 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.⁷
 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him

the world, and also made him an heir of the right standing in God's sight that comes through believing.
 8 Because Abraham believed, when he was commanded to go to a place he did not know--where he was promised an inheritance--he obeyed and went out, having no idea where he would wind up.
 9 Because he believed, he became a nomad in the Land of Promise as if it were a totally alien country, [never settling down permanently, but] living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs along with him who had been given the same promise.
 10 For Abraham never stopped seeking for a city mapped out and built by God Himself.
 11 Through faith also, his wife Sarah received the ability to conceive a child, and delivered him long after she had gone through menopause, for she judged [God], who had promised her, to be faithful.
 12 Therefore, *so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable*, sprang forth from a man so old he was [totally impotent, and] as good as dead.
 13 Now all these great people died in faith, never having received the fullness of the promises made to them--but through the open eyes of faith they saw them afar off, believing and accepting them, and proclaiming themselves to be nothing more than strangers and nomads upon the earth.
 14 For the people proclaiming that, who lived like nomads back then, were making a declaration to all that they were traveling on to a country they hadn't reached yet, but believed was awaiting them at the end of the journey.
 15 And truly, if their hearts had remained behind in the country they had come out of, they may have been tempted to return there.
 16 But they desired a better country--a heavenly one! That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has built a city for them to dwell in.
 17 Because he believed what he had been told, Abraham--when God put *his* faith to the test--was willing to offer up Isaac on a sacrificial altar.
 18 Now it was this same Isaac of whom God had said that: "**In Isaac shall thy seed be called.**"
 19 So Abraham chose to believe God capable of even raising up Isaac from the dead--and, in a prophetic figure, Abraham [came to understand and place faith in what *Christ* would undergo]!
 20 Because *he* had faith, that same Isaac later spoke prophetic blessings over Jacob and Esau.
 21 Because *he* had faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed Joseph's two sons, *showing reverence while leaning upon his staff*.
 21 [Alternate reading]: Because *he* had faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed Joseph's two sons, while *showing submission to the emblem atop Joseph's staff* [that represented his authority].
 22 Because *he* had faith, Joseph, when he died in turn, made mention that the Israelites would leave Egypt, and he gave orders that his bones should be taken with them.
 23 Because *his* parents had faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months because they saw he was a handsome child--and they did not fear the fact Pharaoh had commanded the newborn sons to be killed.
 24-26 Because *he* had faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing

who is invisible.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab⁸ perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah⁹; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.¹⁰

36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder,¹¹ were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

instead to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than those Egypt had to offer--for he kept his mind fixed on the reward of God.

27 Because *he* had faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh--for his strength to endure came by believing in Him whom he could not see, but was as real to him as if he *did* see!

28 Because *he* had faith, he observed the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood on the doorways, lest the angel that destroyed the firstborn touch his people too.

29 Because *they* believed, the people passed through the Red Sea like dry land, while the Egyptians, trying to do likewise, drowned.

30 Because of faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after being marched around for seven days.

31 Because *she* believed, Rahab the prostitute did not die with the unbelievers, for she greeted the spies in peace.

32 What more can I say? I could go on, but there is no time to repeat the deeds of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David too, Samuel, and the prophets--

33-34 Who, through their faith, conquered kingdoms, ruled in righteousness, obtained promises God had made them, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; or out of weakness were made strong, becoming valiant warriors, putting invading armies to flight.

35 There were women who received their dead back to life, while others *through* their faith underwent torture to death, refusing to save their lives by compromise so that they could obtain a better resurrection.

36 Another sort, *for* their faith, underwent trials of cruel mockings and whippings, and chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, [Isaiah was] sawed in half; they suffered lack; they were slain by the sword; they wandered about in sheep and goatskins, being penniless, afflicted, and tormented.

38 These--of whom the world was not worthy--wandered about in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves in the earth.

39 But these all, having left behind a marvelous testimony because of their faith, did not receive the promise,

40 For God had in mind a better thing for us, so that they could not see perfection without us [and what we now walk in--the redemption of the Messiah].

1. I prefer the alternate translation of this verse, which was rejected by the original translators of the King James Bible: "**Faith is a most sure warrant, a being of things hoped for, a demonstration of things not seen.**"

2. There is often a misunderstanding of what "**through faith**" means in this verse. It does not mean that God brought things into being by speaking faith-filled words; it means that because of our faith in what God has said, we believe He spoke, and the universe came into existence.

3. "**Translated**" means to be physically taken to another place, not transformed into another form.

4. It is interesting that the writer reveals that one reason Abraham did not receive the son God promised him was Sarah's lack of faith, which had to be corrected!

5. This humble verse is actually very critical! It hints at the fact that had the lands Abraham (and then later the Hebrews in Egypt) come from been pleasant, and something they would have missed, the people may never have gone on with God, but might have returned when times were tough! How strongly that was shown in the case of the Exodus, where the Hebrews constantly yearned to return to slavery. How much more would they have wished to return there if their past lives had actually been pleasant?!

6. As Jesus reveals in the Gospels, through this experience with Isaac, Abraham somehow had a revelation that God would provide the sacrifice of His own Son to make all people into His people!

7. Again, the context is of those who had been persecuted for their stand (which was ultimately for Christ) and were willing to lose all for the blessing God had promised.

8. There is a common false teaching in Judaism that Rahab was an "innkeeper" rather than a prostitute. This is a medieval, revisionist view, not an ancient one. The Greek also, of course, cannot be referring to an innkeeper, but only to a prostitute.

9. Jephthah is crucially important as an Old Testament type and shadow regarding the Messiah, for he sacrificed his daughter because the Torah (Lev. 27) requires human beings dedicated to God to be slain. This is very problematic to rabbinic Judaism, which must take the view that God could never require a human to be sacrificed.

10. A reference to an inspiring story in 2nd Maccabees 6-7.

11. Referring to Isaiah's death by being placed in a hollow log and sawed in half by King Manassah.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 12

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,¹

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.²

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?³

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.⁴

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the

HEBREWS CHAPTER 12

1 Given the fact that we have such a great legacy handed down to us by those who preceded us [--and since they may be watching how we will respond to that legacy--] let us cast away every hindrance, and the sin which is so easy to be caught up in, and let us run patiently the race set before us,

2 Focused only on Jesus at the finish line, the author and developer of our faith, who--for the joy set before him--endured the cross, scorning its shame, and by that came to sit at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Keep in mind him who endured such torment at the hands of sinners against *himself*, lest *you* get weary [of enduring], and mentally abandon your own commitment.

4 *You* haven't resisted sin to the point of shedding your own blood!

5 But you have forgotten the exhortation written to you as sons of God: **My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.**

7 If you accept chastening, then God will treat you like a son. For what sort of son is never corrected by his father?

8 But if God is not punishing you for your misdeeds [--which befalls all of us--] then you are illegitimate children, and not true legal sons.

9 Furthermore, we all had earthly fathers who corrected us, and we still respected them. Shall we not even more be in subjection to the Father of *spirits*, and live?

10 For our fathers, in the short time we were children, spanked us as they saw fit [--and often because we simply irritated them]. But God disciplines we grown men for our benefit so that we can partake of His holiness.

11 Now no spanking seems good when it happens--in fact, it is grievous. But afterwards, it helps children to grow up and be people of good character [if they accept the correction].

12 So *snap to attention, lock your knees in place*, and stop sulking!

13 Start walking down the straight path, lest your weak knees become crippled altogether. It's better for them to be healed.

14 Seek peace with all men, and pursue holiness, without which no man will see the Lord.

15 Pursue it diligently, lest any man fall from God's grace and cause a root of bitterness to spring up among you that will defile many.

16 [Pursue it diligently,] lest anyone become sexually immoral, or else profane like Esau, who sold his entire birthright for one morsel of meat.

17 For you recall that he was sorry afterward, when he could have inherited the blessing, but was rejected. Things could not be undone even though he shed bitter tears over it.

18-19 Remember you haven't come to Mount Sinai, the *physical* mountain one could touch, which burned with fire and was overshadowed in blackness, darkness, a great wind, with the sound of a *shofar*, and a voice so frightening that the people begged not to hear any more words from it.

20 For those people could not bear what was commanded them: **"And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart."**

21 This was all so fearsome that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake!"

22 But you are of those who have come instead to Mount Zion, to the very city of the Living God--the heavenly

mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:
 21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake;⁵
 22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,
 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,⁶
 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.
 25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:
 26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.
 27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.
 28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:
 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Jerusalem--where there is an innumerable group of angels.
 23 You have been called to the great gathering and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to come to the God and Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just [dead] who have been made perfect.
 24 And you have been called to Jesus--the mediator of the New covenant--and to the new sort of sprinkled blood that cries out much more positive words [of mercy and forgiveness] than the blood of Abel [that cried out for vengeance].
 24 [*Alternate reading*]: And you have been called to Jesus--the mediator of the New covenant--and to the new sort of sprinkled blood that represents much better things than the blood of Abel's [fully approved-of] sacrifice.
 25 See to it that you do not scorn Him who speaks to you. For if they did not escape [judgment], who rejected [God]--who then spoke on the earth--much less will we escape judgment if we turn away when He now speaks from heaven!
 26 God's voice only shook the *earth* [back at Sinai], but He promises now: *Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the universe.*
 27 And this phrase, "*Yet once more*," signifies that the things shaken will be taken out of the way completely--but only those things that have been created will experience this, so that what remains will only be those things that are immovable and unshakable.
 28 And so, since we are inheriting a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us in gratitude serve God with acceptable reverence and godly fear.
 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

1. The early church commentators believed that the writer was teaching that these great heroes of the faith look down on us from heaven to see if we will carry forward the messages of God as they did in their own lifetimes. Later theologians viewed the verse as indicating that the written records of the Old Testament saints' lives are themselves the "**witnesses**" being spoken of.
2. Joyce Meyer has a great book, *The Battlefield of the Mind*, which so illustrates what the writer here shows: That it is in the human mind that the battle is fought.
3. Judaism affirms the pre-existence of souls, something rejected by orthodox Christianity. The writer, however, could theoretically be referring to that notion when he calls God the "**Father of spirits**."
4. Although the Bible does not record it, Jewish history recalls that Esau--who was cheated of the birthright--had a second chance at it. When Isaac died, he and Jacob met to bury Isaac and formally divide the inheritance. Esau had the right, as firstborn son, to claim the land that fell within the blessing that Isaac earlier gave to Jacob. Jacob instead offered him all the goods of Isaac--the flocks and servants--and Esau again took the carnal things, leaving Jacob the land and the promises that went with it. This is why Esau and his descendants left the land and settled in Edom permanently instead of remaining in the Land of Promise.
5. This exact quote is nowhere in Scripture, and is almost certainly derived from the Aramaic *Targums* (paraphrases) of the Old Testament, which are filled with extra-biblical myths and information.
6. This is a strong verse to justify the notion of Purgatory, but probably refers to saints who died before Christ (11:40).

HEBREWS CHAPTER 13

1 Let brotherly love continue.
 2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.¹
 3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.
 4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.
 5 Let your conversation² be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.
 7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God:

HEBREWS CHAPTER 13

1 Continue in brotherly love.
 2 And don't forget to be hospitable to strangers, for some have done that and had angels as guests in their homes without realizing it.
 3 Don't forget those who are imprisoned. Remember them as if you, yourselves, were jailed alongside them. Likewise, have compassion on those who suffer adversity as if *you* were the one undergoing the trial!
 4 Let marriage be held as an honorable estate, and keep the marriage bed undefiled, for God will judge those who engage in sex outside of marriage.
 5-6 Let your lifestyle be one that exhibits no greed, and be content with what you have. Remember, Jesus has said: **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**, so that we can boldly proclaim that, **The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.**
 7 Take as example those with [spiritual] authority over you,

whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation².
 8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
 9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.³
 10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.⁴
 11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.
 12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.
 13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.⁵
 14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.
 15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.
 16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
 17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.
 18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.
 19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.
 20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
 22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.
 23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.⁶
 24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.
 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

who have proclaimed the Message of God to you. Imitate the traits of their mature faith, which are shown by their consistently godly lifestyles.
 8 [For] “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever!”
 9 Don’t be carried about with different, strange doctrines [about ritual eating of foods and the like]. For it is a good thing for the heart to be firm in its faith solely on the basis of grace, without polluting that grace by adding commandments regarding meats, which hasn’t done those caught up in such ritual any good anyway.
 10 We have a [Communion] altar to eat from that even the priests who serve in the Temple in Jerusalem have no right to eat from anyway!
 11 For the carcasses of the animals whose blood is brought into the Sanctuary by the High Priest to atone for sin are burned **outside the camp**.
 12 That is why Jesus also suffered outside the city gate [where the red heifer was sacrificed], so that he could sanctify the people with *his* own blood.
 13 Let us therefore [leave Jerusalem and the system it represents,] and go forth to him who is **outside the camp**, enduring the same reproach Jerusalem had for him too.
 14 For we have no city on earth to call our permanent home, but we seek the one that is to come.
 15 Therefore, by Jesus, let us continually offer up the sacrifice of praise—the fruit from our lips—to God continually, giving thanks to His name.
 16 But keep doing good deeds and remember to share, for with those sorts of sacrifices God is well pleased.
 17 Obey those [in the church] who have [spiritual] authority over you, and submit to them, for they watch over your souls and must someday give an account. Let them do that with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable to you.
 18 Pray for us, for we believe our consciences are clear, and that we are willing, in all ways, to live honestly.
 19 I beg you especially to pray that I may be released to you all the sooner.
 20-21 Now the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep—through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, developing in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
 22 And I [—the co-writer of this epistle—] beg you, brethren, to heed this message of exhortation, though I haven’t written a great deal of it.
 23 You should all know that our brother Timothy is set free, with whom I shall also come, if he journeys to you shortly.
 24 Greet those who have rule over you, and all the righteous there. Those in Italy send greetings!
 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

1. Probably a reference to Abraham’s visit with angels in Genesis 18.

2. As is typical, “**conversation**” means “**lifestyle**.”

3. We can’t be certain what the writer is referring to. Most likely, it is with the host of rabbinic prohibitions dealing with eating, along with the washing of utensils.

4. In the Temple lay the *shewbread*, which only the priests could eat. It is interesting that the writer is actually saying that the very priests serving God in the Temple, because they have rejected Christ, are now unworthy to eat the *true* table of God (Communion), in comparison to the Christians.

5. Poetic language stating that since the unbelieving Jews have expelled the Christians from the Jewish community, the Christians should accept that rejection since Christ also suffered “**outside the camp**.”

6. Paul—or perhaps the co-writer of the Epistle—was apparently free when this was written.

2nd TIMOTHY

We come now to Paul's final epistle, written in the last months of his life during his imprisonment in Rome around 67 AD. Knowing he is about to die, Paul's exhortation to Timothy is that he carry on the work of the Gospel. Paul reminds his protégé he has been given the power of the Spirit to fulfill the mission he has been commissioned with, and that God has been, and will continue to be, faithful regardless of what man can do.

Paul was beheaded some time after writing this letter. According to tradition, the soldiers who guarded him in the prison died with him as his last converts.

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;
4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;
5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.
6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.¹
7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.²
8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;
9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,
10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:
11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.
12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.³
13 Hold fast the form of sound words⁴, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.
14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.
15 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.
16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed⁵ me, and was not ashamed of my chain:
17 But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1 aul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace to you, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
3 I thank God--whom I serve with a clear conscience as did my forefathers--that I unceasingly remember you in my prayers, day and night,
4-5 Greatly wanting to see you when I remember your tears, that I may be filled with joy when I call to mind the sincere faith you have that first was in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure is in you too.
6 That is why I am reminding you to fan into fire the gift of God that was placed in you when I [laid hands on, and ordained you].
7 For God has not given us an attitude of fear--but of power, love, and a disciplined mind.
8-10 So do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner--but be willing to share my afflictions for the Gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and gave us a holy calling not for anything we have done, but for His own purpose, through His grace which was ordained for us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now manifested by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and through the Gospel has brought to light the way to life and immortality.
11 And it is this very Gospel to which I am appointed a preacher, apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles.
12 And it's also because of the Gospel that I am suffering these things. Even so, I am not ashamed, because I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep safe [the Gospel message] he revealed to me, until that Day.
13 In the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus, hold fast, and conform yourself, to the sound teachings that you heard from me.
14 Keep safe, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, that good thing that was ordained to you to keep.
15 You already know that all who came with me from Turkey have turned away from me, including Phygellus and Hermogenes.
16 But may the Lord show mercy to the family of Onesiphorus, for he was often here as a breath of cool, fresh air, and was not ashamed of my chain.

diligently, and found me.

18 The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day⁶: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

17 In fact, when he arrived in Rome, he hunted everywhere until he found me.

18 May the Lord Jesus grant him mercy in that Day, for you know very well all he did to aid me in Ephesus.

1. Paul here refers to a Charismatic anointing given to Timothy by the laying on of hands. This is over and above the basic indwelling of the Spirit and access to normal spiritual fruit available to all Christians.

2. “**Disciplined mind**” is a better translation.

3. There are a couple of different ways to understand this verse. Paul may be saying that despite the fact he is about to die, and God has not somehow preserved him, he has not failed in his mission, nor will that mission end in failure with his demise, for God will perpetuate it through those who will follow the apostle. Based on verse 2 of the following chapter, the paraphrase takes this view. Otherwise, Paul is saying that he has entrusted something for *God* to faithfully keep safe. (Presumably, the churches and people.) See also the commentary in 6.

4. “**Words**” should be understood as: “**Teachings**.”

5. The word here in Greek eventually came down to us as the word *refrigerator*. In the heat of his prison, Paul mentions that Onesiphorus’ visits were a great refreshment to him.

6. The phrase, “**the Day of the LORD**,” and others like it, have a variety of meanings. The chief meaning, foretold in the Old Testament, is that of the Tribulation period—culminated with the second coming of Christ—where the judgment and wrath of God is unleashed against sin (Amos 5:18). It also refers to a time when the Jews during the Tribulation will call upon Christ (i.e., the LORD) and be saved (Joel 2:32). It also includes the Last Judgment (2 Tim. 4:1) and the destruction and re-creation of the universe (2 Peter 3:10). Some teach this and verse 12 refer to the Last Judgment, and conclude: “See? We can have no certainty about our salvation, because we will need mercy at the Last Judgment as God reviews our deeds! So we must make certain we live as righteously as we can so our deeds will pass scrutiny and we can enter into eternal life. Otherwise, we will fail the test, and be lost!” That view is, of course, the fruit of a false Gospel of Law and works, not Grace and Faith.

In verse 12, Paul is saying God will keep safe the church or Paul’s message to the final appearance of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. In verse 18, Paul is again referring to the Tribulation period. He is not praying God will show mercy to Onesiphorus—a righteous man to start with—at the Last Judgment so he gets into heaven; he is praying Onesiphorus be found worthy to “**escape**” the wrath coming on the earth as Jesus commands to do (Luke 24:36).

No saved Christian—especially a righteous one like Onesiphorus—will stand at the Last Judgment, needing the mercy of God to escape Hell during a scrutiny of his life. Instead, he’ll be welcomed (2 Peter 1:10-11)! The Christian has *already* been shown mercy at the Cross! No Christian—that is, one actually dying in a state of grace and salvation—will somehow fail some sort of scrutiny at the Last Judgment and wind up damned. The redeemed are consigned to eternal life the moment they die—just as the lost are consigned to damnation—and no scrutiny can change that. No additional mercy is required to assure that or the basis for getting in would be based on the good works of the individual and not the merits of Christ alone, thus requiring a scrutinizing God to show mercy to overlook the imperfect works of the redeemed, making salvation a process of co-redemption. What a Christian *may* need some mercy for at the Judgment is to avoid losing reward for the imperfection of works done in the name of the Master for less than selfless motives, or to avoid losing reward for the trials he underwent in life, failing to respond with the most Christlike attitude. But never for his sins, which have been fully atoned for by Christ’s blood, nor for the believer’s unrighteousness, which has been freely exchanged for Christ’s *perfect* righteousness independent of his deeds and lifestyle! Yes, he can lose his salvation based on his willful, unrepentant serious sin and rebellion, which can cause him to lose his saving faith—but no scrutiny is needed at the Last Judgment to determine if this has happened or if he needs mercy to avoid the repercussions. He is either saved or not saved at the moment of death. No scrutiny can alter that.

Bottom line: when Paul uses any phrase like “**the Day of Christ**” or “**that Day**,” his focus is the return and revealing of Christ after the wrath of the Tribulation.

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.
3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.
4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.
5 And if a man also strive for masteries,¹ yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.
6 The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.
7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.
8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:
9 Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.
10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

1 Therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2 And the teachings you heard me proclaim among many witnesses—impart these to faithful men with the ability to teach them to others also.
3 Endure hardship well, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ should.
4 No man who goes to war worries about the pragmatic, day-to-day concerns of life in order to be pleasing to the commander who drafted him.
5 And no one in a race wins the crown unless he plays by the rules.
6 The vinedresser who works in the vineyard must be the first to sample the fruits.
7 Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in everything.
8 Never forget the foundation of what I proclaim: That Jesus Christ, of David’s lineage, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel:
9 And that is why I am treated like some evildoer, being placed in chains—but the Message of God is not hindered or chained in any way!

which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

14 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.²

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;³

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.⁴

10 Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect so that they may also obtain salvation and eternal glory through Christ Jesus.

11 You can believe this saying: *If we die with him, we shall certainly live with him.*

12 *If we endure for him, we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him, he will deny us.*

13 *Even if we lose faith, he is still faithful, for he cannot deny himself.*

14 Emphasize this to the ones you select, and charge them before the Lord not to get into wordy arguments which only destroy those who are listening.

15 Strive to show yourself approved of God, and be a workman who has no reason to be ashamed, correctly teaching and handling the Message of truth.

16 But avoid pointless arguments, for they will only lead to more ungodliness,

17 And will rot like gangrene among the congregation.

Hymenaeus and Philetus are two good examples of this,

18 Who, so far as the truth is concerned, have strayed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred. They and their teachings are overthrowing some people's faith.

19 Even so, the foundation stone of God is still standing secure, with this inscription on it: *The Lord knows those who are His.* And: *Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

20 In a great house, there are not only containers of gold and silver, but also containers of wood and clay. And some are used for important purposes, and some are [chamber pots].

21 If a man purges himself from the things I've been warning about, he shall be a container of importance, set apart and available for the Master to use in every good work of his.

22 Flee also from youthful desires. Instead, with all those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart, pursue righteousness, faith, charity, and peace.

23 But avoid foolish and ignorant questions, knowing they only create strife.

24 And the slave of the Lord must not be in strife, but must be soft-spoken to all men, able to teach, able to turn the other cheek,

25 Meekly correcting those who oppose him in hope God will sober up their thinking, that they may repent, and acknowledge the truth,

26 And by this escape the snare of the devil, who takes the unsaved captive at his will.

1. "Run in a race" would be a better understanding of the single Greek word here translated as: "Strive for masteries."

2. Paul here is admonishing Timothy and the elders to avoid arguing over extraneous points of the Law that can serve no real purpose other than to bring division and confusion over issues of no great importance.

3. An extremely important verse that shows repentance comes only from the Holy Spirit granting a man the capability to repent. This is why intellectually trying to persuade the skeptic through use of Apologetics is often a waste of time, for it is through a man's spirit, not his rational mind, that he is enabled to obtain eternal life. In almost every case, no argument satisfies the skeptic because he has already chosen not to believe.

4. Another key verse suggesting that the devil has overwhelming control over the unsaved. However, it could theoretically be understood like this: *...And by this escape the snare of the devil who has taken them captive, that they may do [God's] will.*

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

1 This know also, that in the last days¹ perilous² times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

1 You should also know this: In the last days of this Age [just before the Messianic Age begins], very violent times will come.

2 [These times will be marked by unprecedented selfishness and self-gratification.] Men will not care about anyone but

disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
 3 Without natural affection,³ trucebreakers,
 false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of
 those that are good,
 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of
 pleasures more than lovers of God;
 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the
 power thereof: from such turn away.
 6 For of this sort are they which creep into
 houses, and lead captive silly women laden
 with sins, led away with divers lusts,
 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the
 knowledge of the truth.
 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres⁴ withstood
 Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of
 corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.
 9 But they shall proceed no further: for their
 folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs
 also was.
 10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine,
 manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering,
 charity, patience,
 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto
 me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what
 persecutions I endured: but out of them all the
 Lord delivered me.
 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ
 Jesus shall suffer persecution.
 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse
 and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.
 14 But continue thou in the things which thou
 hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing
 of whom thou hast learned them;
 15 And that from a child thou hast known the
 holy scriptures, which are able to make thee
 wise unto salvation through faith which is in
 Christ Jesus.
 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God,
 and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for
 correction, for instruction in righteousness:⁵
 17 That the man of God may be perfect,
 thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

themselves; their only love will be for material things. They will
 be loud-mouthed. They will be arrogant. They will be
 blasphemous. Disobedient to their parents. Unthankful. Unholy.
 3 They will not even have love for others in their family. They
 won't keep their word. Slander will flow from their lips like
 water. Self-control will be a totally alien concept to them. They
 will be violent. They will hate anything or anyone good.
 4 They will be traitors. They will be reckless. They will be
 haughty. They will love pleasure rather than God.
 5 They will have an outward form of being religious, but will
 deny the true power of God [to change the *inside*]. Turn your
 back on these sorts of people.
 6 For people like this are the sort who creep into houses and take
 captive silly women who, in their sinful lust, crave fantasy in
 place of reality.
 7 Such women think they're always "learning" from them—but
 they never learn enough to come to the truth.
 7 [Alternate reading]: These men think they're always
 "learning"—but they never learn enough to come to the truth!
 8 Now as Pharaoh's magicians, Jannes and Jambres, opposed
 Moses, so these men also stand against the truth. They are men
 of corrupt minds, and are heretics so far as the true Christian
 faith goes.
 9 But they will prosper no longer, for their folly will be shown to
 all men for what it is, just as happened with the magicians.
 10-11 But you have been made fully aware of my doctrine, and
 have seen my lifestyle, goals, faith, perseverance, charity,
 patience, persecutions, and afflictions that befell me at Antioch,
 Iconium, and Lystra. Yes, those were horrible persecutions I
 went through, but the Lord delivered me from all of them.
 12 And yes, all in Christ Jesus who live godly will suffer
 persecution.
 13 But evil men and impostors shall get worse and worse,
 deceiving others while sinking into deeper deception themselves.
 14 But continue in what *you* have learned and been assured of is
 the truth, mindful of who taught you.
 15 From the time you were a babe, you have also known the
 Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise, leading to
 salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
 16 All Scripture, in fact, is given through the inspiration of God,
 and is profitable for doctrine, for confronting one about his sin,
 for correction, and to instruct one in godly living,
 17 So that the man of God may be mature and thoroughly
 equipped to perform all sorts of good works.

1. Some people appeal to Acts 2, and ridicule those who see the term "**last days**" as applying to modern times, for in their view we have been in the "**last days**" since the time of Christ, based on Peter's reference to Joel's prophecy. However, we see Paul here clearly articulating that there *is* a future time to come that will see mankind descend into anarchy.

2. Some assert the term "demon-filled times" is a more correct rendering of the word here, but "violent, chaotic times" is probably closest to the meaning of the word.

3. "**Without natural affection**" is not some reference to homosexuality, but is better understood as lacking familial love and fidelity.

4. This pair are not mentioned by name in Scripture, but are named in Jewish oral tradition and apocryphal writings.

5. One of the most important verses Paul has written, for he illustrates here the purpose and use of Scripture: To reveal the Messiah, and then reprove, correct, and instruct believers in the manner of godly living. Outside these parameters, things like perceived "contradictions" or "errors" are irrelevant since, for instance, whether there was one Gadarene demoniac, or two, has no bearing on issues dealing with salvation and the Christian lifestyle. It is the theological message the Scripture intends to convey, and not the minutiae of text used to convey the message, that is inerrant.

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord
 Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the
 dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
 2 Preach the word; be instant¹ in season, out of
 season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus
 Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his
 appearance and the ushering in of his Kingdom,
 2 That you preach the Message, and that you are ready,
 whether the Message will be received or rejected, to

longsuffering and doctrine.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.²

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:

10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.

13 The cloke³ that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

14 Alexander the coppersmith⁴ did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:

15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

19 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

21 Do thy diligence to come before winter.

Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus⁵, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

patiently reprove, rebuke, and exhort, in accordance with sound doctrine.

3 For the time will come when people will not accept sound doctrine. Instead, to justify their own selfish desires, they will find teachers to say what they want to hear.

4 They will stuff cotton into their ears to avoid hearing the truth, and instead open their ears to myths.

5 But be steadfast in everything that is true. Endure afflictions. Do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry.

6 For I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight...

I have finished the race...

I have guarded the faith.

8 And now there is a crown of righteousness awaiting me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will present to me on that day. And I won't be the only one to get one--all who love his appearance will receive crowns too!

9 Do all you can to get here quickly,

10 For Demas has abandoned me, having had more love for the things of this world than the Gospel, and left for Thessalonica. Crescens is gone to Galatia, and Titus has left for Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke has remained behind with me. Find Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in the ministry.

12 I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

13 Bring the [scroll case] I left with Carpus at Troas when you come, along with the scrolls, and especially the parchments in it.

14 Alexander the coppersmith did much evil to me [with his testimony to the Romans that put me here]--may the Lord give him the reward he deserves for it!

15 You watch out for him, for he has greatly opposed our teachings.

16 At my first appearance before the Praetorian Praefect no one stood with me, and I was all alone, for they all abandoned me. I pray God not hold that sin against them.

17 Even so, the *Lord* stood with me and strengthened me so that through me the Gospel message might be fully proclaimed to the Gentiles. So that time, anyway, I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil plot, and will preserve me until I enter his heavenly kingdom. Glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

19 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

20 Erastus stayed at Corinth, but I had to leave Trophimus sick at Miletus.

21 Do all you can to get here before winter. Eubulus sends greeting, along with Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.

22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

¹ "Instant" is better translated as: "Prepared," "ready," etc.

² "Fables" refers to myths and false teachings, such as the claims of Mormonism, or the messages to humanity by alleged extraterrestrials or other spirit entities.

³ Lamsa speculates that a mistranslation has crept into the text here. He reasonably points out that Paul would have no great concern over an article of clothing, but if the Greek word is traced back to the Aramaic, it refers to a book or scroll case containing important documents, which melds perfectly with the words following. In this rare case, the paraphrase will follow that line of reasoning.

⁴ Tradition asserts that this metalworker ratted Paul out to the Roman authorities, resulting in his final trial and execution.

⁵ Catholic tradition asserts this Linus became the second pope, replacing Peter as Bishop of Rome.

1st John

The three epistles following are attributed to the apostle John by tradition. They were written in Ephesus between 90-95 AD.

The chief issues John deals with are identical to those which the last few epistles we've read expressed concern over: Sin and false teachers like the *Pneumatakoï*--early heretics who later flowered into the Gnostics. They denied the humanity of Christ, and led amoral lives in the belief that the soul must sin in order to be saved, for only in knowledge and experience could mortal man supposedly advance to perfection.

Interestingly, it is only in 1st and 2nd John that we see the term **Antichrist**.

1st JOHN CHAPTER 1

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;¹
2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)
3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.
4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.
5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:²
7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.
8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.³

1st JOHN CHAPTER 1

1-2 e who was from the beginning...
Whom we have heard...
Whom we have seen with our eyes...
Whom we have looked upon...
Whom our hands have actually handled...
Yes, the things we saw and heard from the Word of Life--for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it--we now bear witness of, and proclaim to you that eternal life who was with the Father and was manifested to us.
3 Yes, that which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you, that you may also have fellowship with us. And truly our common fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.
4 And we write what we do to you, so that your joy may be full.
5 This, then, is the message we have heard from Him, and proclaim to you: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all!
6 And so if we claim to have fellowship with Him but yet walk in darkness, we are lying and do not [walk in] truth.
7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we are united together, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son is cleansing us from every sin!
8 If we deny we have sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and true to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us.

1. Note the close similarity in language between the opening of this Epistle and John 1:1.

2. John now illustrates that God and His Gospel are both pure and full of light in contrast to the perverted gospel that some teachers were offering.

3. I have actually known some people who claimed they were no longer sinners simply because they had come to Christ. Some modern teachers even claim that once we accept Christ we have no need to seek forgiveness for anything, and thus there is no warrant for ever asking God to forgive what they presume He must already have forgiven. Well, here we see that John understood that even the righteous are guilty of sin, and that through our repentance and confession, God forgives and remits the consequences that might be appropriate to what we have done--perhaps not in the sense of eternal consequences, but certainly the temporal.

1st JOHN CHAPTER 2

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1st JOHN CHAPTER 2

1 My little children, I write these things to you so that you do not sin. But if any man does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.¹
 3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.²
 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.
 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.
 7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.
 8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.
 9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.
 10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.
 11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.
 12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.
 13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.
 14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.³
 15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.
 18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.
 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.
 20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.
 21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.
 22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.
 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the

2 And he is the atoning payment for not only our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world.
 3 Here is how we can be sure that we truly know him: if we obey what he has commanded us to do.
 4 He who says, "I know him," but yet does not obey his commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
 5 But whoever keeps his word is the person in whom the love of God is truly perfected. And that is how we can know that we are in him.
 6 He who claims to abide in him should prove that by walking in the same way Christ walked.
 7 Beloved, [in saying this,] I am not writing any new commandment to you--I simply repeat an old commandment you heard from the beginning. The old commandment I speak of [--to love each other--] is the teaching you have had from the beginning.
 8 But in a sense, I write you a new commandment which is true both in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true Light now shines:
 9 He who says he is in the Light, yet hates his brother, is still in darkness.
 10 He who loves his brother abides in the Light, and there is nothing in him that will cause either himself, or others, to stumble.
 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and doesn't know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
 12 I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for [Christ's] name's sake.
 13 I write to you, fathers, because you have known [Christ,] who is from the beginning. I write to you, younger men, because you have conquered the Wicked One. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.
 14 [I repeat:] I wrote to you fathers because you have come to know Christ, who is from the beginning. I wrote to you younger men because you are strong, and the Message of God abides in you, and you have conquered the Wicked One.
 15 Don't love the things in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
 16 For all that is in the world--the things the flesh lusts for...the things the eyes lust for...the pride over transitory accomplishments and material things--none of this is of the Father, but is of the [unsaved] world.
 17 And the world will pass away, along with the things in it people think they want--but he who does the will of God will abide forever.
 18 Little children, it is the last time, and as you have heard, the Antichrist is coming. Even now, there are many [lesser] antichrists in the world--and this is how we know this is the last time.
 19 These [traitors] went out from us, but they were not a part of us--for if they had been of us, they undoubtedly would have continued on with us. But they went out so that they could clearly show that they were not all from us [and our ways].
 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all that you need to know.
 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth; I have written because you *do* know it, and know that no lie springs *from* truth!
 22 Who is a liar, but the one denying that Jesus is the

Father also.

24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Messiah?! He is the antichrist who denies Father-and-Son!

23 And whoever denies the Son, does not have the Father. But he who acknowledges the Son has the Father as well.

24 So let the Message abide in you that you heard from the beginning. If the Message you heard from the beginning remains in you, you shall continue in the Son and in the Father.

25 And this is the promise [Christ] has made to us: even eternal life!

26 I have written these things to you because of those trying to seduce you [away from the true faith].

27 But the anointing that you received from [Christ] lives in you, and you don't need any man to teach you these things--the anointing leads you to, and teaches you, truth. The anointing is truth, and is no lie. And as it has taught you, you shall abide in [Christ].

28 And now, little children, abide in [Christ], that when he appears we may be bold, rather than being ashamed in his presence when he comes.

29 If you know that he is righteous, then you know that every believer who does righteous things is born from [Christ].

1. John here is expounding on the notion that the atonement of Christ has redeemed humanity as a whole, just as Adam's sin damned humanity as a whole. However, this does not mean that all men are saved. While the default for humanity after Christ's atonement is eternal life, that life is still killed off by sin and must be re-appropriated through faith once a person passes the so-called *age of accountability*. Note: there is a slight possibility that John was writing to Jews (see 3rd John 1:3), and so when he speaks of "**our sins**," he would be referring to those of the Jews, while "**the whole world**" would refer to the sins of the Gentiles.

2. We now have an issue that the church must deal with, for John says that if we know God we must keep His commandments. But what does he mean, and what are these commandments?

Are they the 613 commandments of the Torah?

Are they the 10 Commandments?

Are they 9 of the 10 Commandments, excluding the Sabbath commandment?

Are they the commandments of Acts 15?

Are they the two commandments of Jesus' summation of the Law and the prophets?

Is it the one commandment of the Golden Rule?

Is it every exhortation we can find in Scripture, no matter how vague, including men greeting each other with a mouth kiss?

To answer this question, we must first determine whether John is dealing with the subject of commandments in the sense of "Thou shalt," or whether he is using the word in the sense of addressing general exhortations that are not a list of Do's and Don'ts. First, the word for "**commandments**" (*entole*) does not necessarily refer to the Law (*nomos* in Greek). It can refer to simply obeying instructions. If we then look at the overriding theme of the chapter, what we see is an encouragement for the church to walk in love for God and each other. When we hearken back to the words of Christ in the Gospels, we also see Jesus reduced the actual Law to the simplest common denominator of love:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

--Matt. 22 36:40

When we compare this to what John says in verse 7 ("**A new commandment I write unto you**") we see he cannot be talking about commandments in the sense of the Torah or the 10 Commandments. The reason is found in the Torah itself:

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

--Deut. 12:32

No commandment may be added to or taken away from the Torah. Yet John--as Christ at the Last Supper--spoke of a new commandment being given. Thus, the words "**commandment**" and "**commandments**" in this chapter cannot be referring to actual written ordinances like the 10 Commandments (good as they are), but John is using the word in the sense of an exhortation expressed to the hearers. Thus, to "**keep his commandments**" is not referring to a list of defined commandments, but rather is an exhortation to heed what God has instructed in the ways Christians should treat people and each other. It must also be kept in mind that "the commandments" to the Jewish mind of the 1st century meant different things to different people. As we see in Acts 12, Peter acknowledges what is "**Lawful**" to Jews like him is not only the written Torah, but the rabbinic rulings accompanying it.*

* Not entering the house of a Gentile is not in the Torah, but was a Pharisee edict.

Acts 15, meanwhile, gives a short list of necessary commandments to the Gentile believers. So “the commandments” are not really meant to be a set of Do’s and Don’ts everyone must observe; they are meant to be fruit that naturally flows out of the Christian’s life. But one thing is, by and large, universal: The moral precepts within the Law and the 10 Commandments. When it comes right down to it, the writers of Scripture have always presented mercy, justice, abstaining from sexual immorality, and showing love to be the true heart of “the Law.” All these things man—even without the Law and without Christ—knows intrinsically are the right things to do (Romans 2:14-15). Thus, if one of us were to go to John and ask what commandments God wants us to keep, he would not start listing the Torah or the 10 Commandments; he would give the same answer history records he spoke whenever he was asked what message he had for the church: “Love one another.”

3. John may not necessarily be repeating what he just said in the last verse. It’s possible that a scribe in ancient times possessed two slightly different texts of verse 13 and wrote down both, which then came down to us in that form.

1st JOHN CHAPTER 3
 1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons¹ of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.
 2 Beloved, now are we the sons¹ of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.
 4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.²
 5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.
 6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not:³ whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.
 7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.
 8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.
 9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.⁴
 10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.
 11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
 12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.
 13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.
 14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.
 15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.
 16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
 17 But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

1st JOHN CHAPTER 3
 1 Imagine what incredible love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God! Therefore, the world doesn’t know us because it didn’t know God either.
 2 Beloved, we are even now the children of God, and though we don’t know yet what our ultimate form will be like, we do know that when Christ appears we will be like he is, for we shall see him as he actually is!
 3 And every man who has this confidence in him, purifies himself even as [Christ] is pure.
 4 Everyone who is practicing sin is also willfully transgressing the Law, for to [willfully] sin is to live in lawlessness.
 5 And you know that [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him.
 6 Whoever abides in him does not walk in sin. Whoever walks in sin has neither seen nor known him.
 7 Little children, don’t let any man fool you—he who [habitually] does right things, does them because he is righteous as [Christ] is righteous.
 8 He who [habitually] commits sin is of the devil, for the devil sinned from the beginning. And this is why the Son of God was manifested: that he might totally destroy the accomplishments of the devil!
 9 Whoever is born of God does not [habitually] walk in sin, for God’s sperm remains in him, and he cannot [remain a sinner] because he is born of God.
 10 This is how the children of both God and the devil are seen for what they are: Whoever does not live and act righteously is not of God, and neither is a man who does not love his brother Christians.
 11 For again, this was the Message that you heard from the beginning: that we should love one another.
 12 You should not be like Cain, who was of the Wicked One, and slew his brother Abel. And why did he slay him? Because his own deeds were evil, while his brother’s were righteous [and so he did what came naturally out of his evil, Satan-inspired heart].
 13 So don’t be amazed that the world hates you.
 14 We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love our fellow brethren. He who does not love his brother is living in a state of death.
 15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life dwelling in him.
 16 We know what God’s sort of love is like because [Jesus] showed us by laying down his life for us. In like manner, we should be ready to lay our lives down for our brethren.
 17 But if a man is rich in temporal things and turns his head when he sees his brother in need—how can it be said that the love of God dwells in him?
 18 My little children, let us not pay lip service to love—let

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.
 19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.
 20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.
 21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.
 22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.
 23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.
 24 And he that keepeth his commandments⁵ dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

us demonstrate it by deeds and truth!
 19 Having these attitudes, and doing these things, is how we can know we are of the truth and settle our hearts before Him.
 20 For if our conscience condemns us, it is because God is greater than our conscience, and knows all things.
 21 But, beloved, if our conscience is clear, then we have confidence toward God,
 22 And whatever we ask for [in prayer] we receive because we keep his commands and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.
 23 And this is God's commandment: that we first should believe on the person and position of His Son, Jesus Christ; and then always love each other, just as He commanded us to do.
 24 And he who keeps God's commands dwells in God, and God in him. And this is how we know that God abides in us--by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us.

1. "Children" is a better translation.
2. It is interesting that John makes a distinction between sinning and breaking the Torah.
3. John is not saying that someone who has sinned is not of God. He is saying that a person of God does not tolerate sin as an ongoing part of his life. To give an example, one sort of person included in his admonition here would be an openly homosexual minister who justifies his lifestyle while denying the need for repentance.
4. Again, John is talking about lifestyle, not individual acts born from human frailty.
5. And again, "**keepeth his commandments**" should be understood as: "*Obey His commands.*"

1st JOHN CHAPTER 4

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:¹ because many false prophets are gone out into the world.
 2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:²
 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.³
 4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.
 5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.
 6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.
 7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.
 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.
 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.
 12 No man hath seen God at any time.⁴ If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.
 13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in

1st JOHN CHAPTER 4

1 Beloved, don't believe every [teaching] you hear, but test those [teachings] to see if they are of God, for many false prophets are gone out into the world.
 2 This is how you can recognize something from the Spirit of God: Every [teaching] that affirms that Jesus Christ has come in human flesh to the earth is of God.
 3 And every [teaching] that denies the full humanity of Jesus Christ is not of God--it is the [teaching] of Antichrist, whom you have heard is coming, and who, even now, is in the world.
 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome [the false teachers], because greater is [God] who is within you, than any [man] who is in the world.
 5 The [false teachers] are of the world, and thus they speak in the world's way, and the world listens to them.
 6 But we are of God, and he who knows God, listens to us. He who is not of God does not listen to us. That's how we know the difference between the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.
 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love was invented by God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
 8 He who does not love, does not know God, for God is love.
 9 And this was how God showed his love for us: He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.
 10 And this is true love--not that we have loved God, but that He loved *us*, and sent His Son to be atonement for our sins.
 11 Beloved, if God loved us like this, we should, in turn, love one another the same way!
 12 Now no man has ever seen God at any time [but the Son has revealed Him]. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us.
 13 This is how we know that we dwell in Him, and He in

us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.
 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.
 15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
 16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.
 17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.
 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.
 19 We love him, because he first loved us.
 20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?
 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

us: Because He has given us His Spirit [to perfect love in us].
 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.
 15 Whoever shall confess that Jesus is [the Messiah and] Son of God--God dwells in that person, and he dwells in God!
 16 And we have known and believed the love God has for us. God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God dwells in him.
 17 When our love is perfected through our abiding in Him, we can have boldness in the Day of Judgment--because, in this world, we are exactly as He is.
 18 There is no fear in love, for perfected love drives out fear--and fear means we're afraid of judgment. He who fears has not perfected his love yet.
 19 We love Him because he first loved us.
 20 If a man says, "I love God," yet he hates his brother, he is a liar--for how can someone who does not love a brother he can see with his eyes, love a God whom he cannot see?
 21 And God has left us this commandment: He who loves God should love his brother as well.

1. John is not necessarily talking about some sort of Charismatic prophecy given in church; he is primarily using euphemistic language dealing with teachings and revelations.
2. The Gnostics, of course, were teaching Jesus was a spirit being, not a human man.
3. This is one of only four verses in the Bible in which the word "**Antichrist**" is used. As we see, John affirms there is a literal human Antichrist coming, and the spirit that will give birth to him is already in the world. That spirit may not necessarily be one that teaches Jesus was a spirit creature; the spirit (or teaching) he could refer to one that denies Messiah has come in Christ, but *will* come through another to lead the unbelieving Jews.
4. If he isn't being literal, John means that no one has seen God in His absolute fullness. As mentioned in the Hebrews commentary, the belief by some was that the *shekhina* of God manifested as His presence on earth.

1st JOHN CHAPTER 5

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.
 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.
 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.
 4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.
 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?¹
 6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.
 7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.²
 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.
 9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.
 10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.
 11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us

1st JOHN CHAPTER 5

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God, and everyone who loves He who begat the Son, loves the Son who was begotten by Him.
 2 This is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God and keep His commands.
 3 For this is how we show that we love God: we obey what He has commanded us to do. And what He has commanded us to do is not grievous.
 4 For whoever is born of God rises above the world. And this is what gives us the victory over the world: our faith.
 5 Who is him who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is [Messiah and King]?
 6 This is he who came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, who came not only by water, but by water *and* blood. And it is the Holy Spirit that testifies to this, because the Spirit is truth.
 7 For there are three that testify in heaven: The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One!
 8 And there are three who testify on earth: The Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.
 9 If we accept the testimony of men, the testimony of God is even greater, for this is the testimony of God that He has testified of His Son.
 10 He who believes on the Son has that testimony in himself. But he who does not believe God, has made God out to be a liar because he has refused to believe the testimony God gave regarding His Son.
 11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in [and comes through] His Son.
 12 He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son does not have life.

eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.³

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:⁴

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.⁵

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;⁶ but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

13 These things I have written to you who believe on the person and position of the Son of God—so that you may know you have eternal life, and that you may keep believing on the person and position of the Son of God.

14 And we have this assurance in him: that if we ask anything that is accord with his will, he hears us.

15 And if we know he hears us when we ask for something, then we know we will have those things we have asked for.

16 [Now—] if any man observes his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he shall ask, and [God] shall grant life for a sin that is not one leading to death. Now there is a sin that *does* lead to death, and I do not say that you should pray for that sort of sin.

17 All unrighteousness is sin, but there are sins that do not lead to [spiritual] death.

18 We know that whoever is born of God does not walk in ongoing sin; but [Christ], who is begotten of God, keeps him secure, and the Wicked One cannot touch him.

19 And we know that we are of God, while conversely the whole world is under the Wicked One.

20 And we know that the Son of God has come and given us understanding, so that we can know God, who is true; and that we are in him who is [also] true—even His son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves away from idols. Amen.

1. It should not be overlooked that even though John has again returned to the subject of keeping commandments, he shows those who do this and overcome the world are those who believe that Jesus is Messiah, and are born of God. In other words, the overcoming is a fruit of salvation rather than simply an alteration of lifestyle through self-control.

2. This is the great Trinitarian verse in John's writings, although (unfortunately) most newer Bibles declare it was an addition added a thousand years after this epistle was written. While it's true this verse does not appear in any ancient manuscripts, Cyprian quoted it in the 3rd century:

The Lord says: 'I and the Father are one.' And again of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit it is written: 'And these three are one'.

--Treatise 1 on the unity of the Catholic Church, chapter 6.

3. This is an important verse to question the beliefs of some denominations that we can never really know whether or not we are truly saved until we die and find out.

4. Meaning to ask in accordance with what the Scriptures reveal to be God's will.

5. Insufficient information is given to define specifically what unforgivable sin John is speaking of here. It may be that mentioned in Hebrews 6: returning to the synagogue and publicly renouncing Christ.

6. Meaning he doesn't walk in ongoing sin. Otherwise, there are a couple of ways to understand this verse. John's use of the Greek suggests he is most likely saying that Christ is the one who was begotten of God, and keeps the believer secure. Other theologians (and the KJV) would see the verse as saying the believer keeps *himself* secure. The verse, from that perspective, could be paraphrased like this: "*We know that whoever is born of God does not walk in ongoing sin; but he who is begotten of God keeps himself, and the Wicked One cannot touch him.*"

2nd John

2nd JOHN CHAPTER 1

1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children,¹ whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

2 For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

2nd JOHN CHAPTER 1

1  he elder unto the elect Cyria and her children, whom I love in the truth, along with all those who have likewise known the truth,

2 Because that truth lives inside of us, and will be with us forever.

3 Grace, mercy, and peace be with you who walk in truth and love, from God the Father, and the Lord

4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.² This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.

4 I greatly rejoiced when I found your children walking in truth as the Father commanded us to.

5 And now I beseech you, lady--not as if I were writing anything new rather than what we have known from the beginning: that we love one another.

6 And this is love--that we walk after what he has commanded us to do. [And to love is] that commandment, which you have heard from the beginning, and should continue to walk in.

7 For many deceivers are come into the world, who deny that Jesus the Messiah was a human man. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist.

8 Remain steadfast, lest we lose the things for which we have fought, so that we receive a complete reward.

9 Whoever goes beyond the foundations of doctrinal truth [about the nature of Christ], and does not remain in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

10-11 If anyone comes to you and does not hold this doctrine, don't let him into your [church], and don't wish him Godspeed. For someone who [invokes the customary blessing] on such a person makes himself a partaker of his evil deeds.

10-11. [Alternate reading]: If anyone comes to you and does not hold this doctrine, don't let him into your [church], and don't rejoice with him [in fellowship and worship]. For someone who rejoices with such a person [as a brother] makes himself a partaker of his evil deeds.

12 I have many things I could write to you, but I don't want to trust them to paper and ink. Instead, I trust that I can come speak to you all personally, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of your elect sister church send greetings.

1. It is unknown whether John is writing to a specific person (a woman named Cyria), or is speaking euphemistically of a church and its members. Most theologians presume the latter.

2. A reference, once again, to *Docetism*, the Gnostic teaching that Jesus' body was not physical, but rather spiritual.

3rd John

3rd JOHN CHAPTER 1

1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius,¹ whom I love in the truth.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.²

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.³

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be

3rd JOHN CHAPTER 1

1  he elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

2 Beloved, I wish above everything else, that you would prosper and be in good health, just as much as your soul is prospering.

3 For I greatly rejoiced when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, and how you are walking in it.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

5 Beloved, you are certainly showing faithfulness when you do something good on behalf of brethren who are strangers to you.

6 Some you've helped have come here, and told the church of your generosity. It is to your credit to continue sending such men on to where they're going

fellowhelpers to the truth.

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes,⁴ who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

12 Demetrius⁵ hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.⁶

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

in a way God would approve of.

7 For they went out for the sake of the name of Christ, taking no aid from the pagans.

8 We should therefore receive [and aid] such people, that we may be fellow helpers in the truth.

9 I wrote to the church there earlier, but Diotrephes, who loves to lord it over the flock there, does not submit to our authority.

10 And so, if I come there, I will remember the things he has done, and how he has slandered us with malicious words. And even that wasn't enough for him, for he rejected the [other] brethren [we sent out], and excommunicated those of the church who *did* receive them!

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil--follow that which is good! He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has never even seen God.

12 Demetrius has a good reputation among everyone, including the Truth itself. And we also bear record of his character, and you know our testimony is truthful!

13 I have many things I could write to you, but I don't want to trust them to paper and ink.

14 Instead, I trust that I can soon come speak to you face to face. Peace to you. Our friends send greeting. Greet the friends there by name.

1. Apparently, the elder or pastor of some church whose location is not mentioned.

2. This is not a theological statement about material prosperity, but rather a popular greeting of the time.

3. Although Gaius is a Gentile name, it is interesting that John mentions Gentiles here as a distinct group, suggesting strongly that Gaius and his church were comprised of Jewish believers. He may be using the word *Gentiles* in the classic Jewish sense of "pagans," referring to Gentile non-believers, and so would not be lumping in Gentile Christians with them.

4. Another elder or pastor, though clearly a heretical one.

5. We have no idea who Demetrius was, although he certainly seems to have had John's respect.

6. Note the obvious similarity with the gloss added in John 21:24, showing the early caretakers of that Gospel were familiar with John's own words in this epistle and applied them to the Gospel text. The word "**record**" is the same word is translated there as "**testimony**."

Revelation

We now come to the final book of the Bible, written around 96 AD. Revelation has always been controversial, and was the last book of the Bible to be deemed as canonical by the Catholic Church in the fourth century. Even so, for centuries it was still rejected by the Eastern Church, and not received as a part of their canon until after 900 AD. To this day, it is the only book that is not read in any of the Eastern Orthodox liturgies. During the Reformation even Luther questioned its legitimacy. Calvin also may have had doubts about it for he wrote no commentaries on Revelation.

Because it would take an entire book to properly comment on Revelation, the commentary on it will be limited.

REVELATION CHAPTER 1

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:
2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.
3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.
4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia:¹ Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;
5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.
8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.
9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.
10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,
11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.
12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;
13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.
14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

REVELATION CHAPTER 1

1  This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to show His servants the things that must shortly come to pass. He sent this message and assigned an angel to deliver it to His servant John,
2 Who bore record of the Message of God, and testified about Jesus Christ, and about all the things he saw.
3 Blessed is he who reads, and those who understand, and those who keep what is written in the words of this prophecy, for the epoch is at hand.
4 John: to the seven churches in Turkey. Grace and peace be to you from [God] who is, and was, and is to come; and [grace and peace also] from the seven Spirits that are before His throne;
5 And [grace and peace] from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. To he who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
6 And who has made us kings and priests unto God his Father--to him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen.
7 Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him--including those who pierced him. And all the peoples of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, amen.
8 I am the Alpha and Omega--the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, who is, and was, and is to come--the Almighty!
9 I John, who am also your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and perseverance of Jesus Christ, was on the island called Patmos, exiled there for the Message of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.
10 I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice like a *shofar*,
11 Saying: I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last! What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches that are in Turkey: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
12 And I turned to look at the voice that spoke to me. When I turned, I saw seven golden menorahs.
13 In the midst of the menorahs was one like the Son of Man [--the *bar Enash* Daniel prophesied about--] clothed with a robe down to the foot, and a golden belt about his waist.

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.
 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.
 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.²
 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.
 19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;
 20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels³ of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

14 His head and hair were white like wool--and white as snow! And his eyes were like flames of fire!
 15 And his feet were like fine brass, as if they had been forged in a furnace; and his voice was as the sound of many waterfalls!
 16 He had seven stars in his right hand, and out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword. His countenance was like the sun shining in all its strength!
 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he laid his right hand upon me, saying: Fear not--I am the First and the Last!
 18 I am he who lives, and was dead! Behold, I am alive forevermore, amen! And I have the keys [of authority] over both death and *Sheol*.
 19 Write down what you have seen, the things you are seeing, and the things you shall see:
 20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden menorahs. The seven stars are the [Overseers] of the seven churches; and the seven menorahs are the seven churches themselves.

1. "Asia" refers to central and western Turkey. A false teaching that the different churches represent various church ages has arisen from the order in which the churches are addressed. Actually, they are addressed in the order they are simply because this is the order they naturally fall in as one travels in a circle.
2. This verse, coupled with the next, is absolute proof that Jesus Christ is God, since God otherwise (Isaiah 41:4) says that about Himself.
3. These may not be angels as we think of them. The term in Jewish context here is likely the chief elder of a synagogue who oversaw teaching the people. (Today the elder, or *Chazan*, is a cantor.)

REVELATION CHAPTER 2

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;
 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:
 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.
 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.
 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans,¹ which I also hate.
 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.
 8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;
 9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.²
 10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

REVELATION CHAPTER 2

1 To the [Overseer] of the church at Ephesus, write: These things says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden menorahs:
 2 I know your deeds, and your work, and your persistence, and how you cannot bear those who are evil; and the fact that you have tested those who claim to be apostles--though they aren't--and have found them to be liars.
 3 You have borne up patiently, and for the sake of who and what I am you have worked and not grown weary.
 4 Nevertheless, I have a grievance against you for the fact that you have left your first love.
 5 Go back and remember where you fell from. Repent, and do the first deeds, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your menorah out of its place unless you repent.
 6 But this you have going for you--you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I hate as well.
 7 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches: To him who overcomes, I will give fruit to eat from the Tree of Life that is in the middle of the Paradise God created.
 8 To the [Overseer] at the church of Smyrna, write: These things says the First and the Last, who was dead and is now alive:
 9 I know your deeds, trials, and poverty--though you are truly rich! And I know the slanderous things said about you by those who claim to be Jews, but are not, and rather are from the synagogue of Satan.
 10 Don't be afraid of the things you will suffer! Behold--the devil will cast some of you into dungeons, that you may be tested. You will have tribulation for ten days. But be faithful to death, and I will give you a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.
 12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;
 13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat³ is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.
 14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.
 15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.
 16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone,⁴ and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.
 18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;
 19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.
 20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.
 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.
 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.
 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.
 24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.
 25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.
 26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:
 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.
 28 And I will give him the morning star.
 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

11 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches: Him who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.
 12 And to the [Overseer] at Pergamos, write: These things says he who has the sharp, double-edged sword:
 13 I know your works, and where you dwell—even where Satan's throne is [on a mountain above the city]! I know you have held fast to my name, and have not denied your faith in me, even as in the days when Antipas, my faithful martyr, was slain among you there, in the place Satan dwells.
 14 But I have a few grievances against you, because you have among you some who hold to the ways of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, instructing them to [idolatrously] eat things offered up to idols, and to commit sexual sin.
 15 You also have some there who hold the doctrines of the Nicolaitans, doctrines that I hate.
 16 Repent, or I will come to you quickly, and unleash all out war against these with the sword of my mouth!
 17 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches: To him who overcomes, I will give to eat of the "hidden manna," and will give him a white [voting pebble to show I have declared him innocent], and on it a new name inscribed that no one knows but he who receives it.
 18 And to the [Overseer] at the church at Thyatira, write: These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like flaming fire, and feet like fine brass:
 19 I know your deeds, love, acts of service, faith, perseverance; and how you are even more zealous of these now than you were in the beginning.
 20 But I still have some grievances regarding you, because you allow that woman named Jezebel—who calls herself a prophetess—to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual sin, and to [idolatrously] eat things offered up to idols.
 21 I gave her some time to repent of her [physical and spiritual] fornication, but she would not.
 22 Behold—I will cast her into a sick bed; and those who commit [physical and spiritual] sin at her behest I will send into great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds.
 23 And I will slay her children to death; and all the churches will know that I am he who searches out the thoughts and hearts; and I will give to every one of you according to what you have done.
 24 But I say to you, and to the rest in Thyatira—as many as reject her doctrine, and have not plumbed the depths of Satan [the so-called "deep mysteries"] she and hers tell you of—that I will lay no greater burden upon you.
 25 But that [truth] which you already have—hold fast until I come.
 26 And him who overcomes, and continues to do what I have shown to do to the end—to him will I give power over the [Gentile] nations.
 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron. As the pots of a potter, the nations will be broken into shards with the same authority as I have received from my Father.
 28 And I will also give him the Morning Star.
 29 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches.

1. Just who the Nicolaitans were isn't fully known. They may have been a Gnostic group that discouraged marriage, yet degenerated

- into sexual profligates; or they may have mixed paganism with Christianity and/or introduced a sort of priestly hierarchy.
 2. Although offensive in language, this reveals how seriously God views a Judaism that denies Christ is Messiah.
 3. The reference to "**Satan's seat**" (throne) refers to a giant throne-shaped altar to Zeus erected on a mountain above the city. (This magnificent altar still exists in a Berlin museum.) Pergamos was also a seat of what we would today call media and communication, along with being a major center of emperor-worship. Antipas, meanwhile, (meaning "Against All" or a non-compromiser) was a martyr who testified of Christ to local authorities and was then roasted to death inside a giant bronze bull.
 4. The "**white stone**" is probably a reference to the white voting pebble that is cast to show one's innocence.

REVELATION CHAPTER 3

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God,¹ and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.
 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.
 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.
 4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.
 5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
 7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David,² he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;
 8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.
 9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.
 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.
 11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.
 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;
 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.
 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that

REVELATION CHAPTER 3

1 To the [Overseer] of the church at Sardis, write: These things says he who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know your deeds, and that you have a reputation for being alive, though you are dead.
 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the good things remaining in you which are about to die, for I have not found your deeds acceptable before God.
 3 So remember how you first received and heard [the truth]. Hold fast to that, and repent. If you do not stay on watch, I will come upon you as a thief in the night, and you won't know what hour I will come upon you.
 4 You have a few people even in Sardis who have not defiled their robes, and they will walk with me clothed in white, for they are worthy.
 5 Him who overcomes shall be clothed in white clothing, and I will not blot his name out of the Scroll of Life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.
 6 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches.
 7 To the [Overseer] of the church at Philadelphia, write: These things says he that is holy, true, and who has the key of David—who is the one who opens and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens.
 8 I know your deeds. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can close it, for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied who and what I am.
 9 Behold—I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, yet who are not, but rather lie—to come and do obeisance before your feet, and cause them to know that I have loved you.
 10 Because you all have followed my example of perseverance, I will also keep you from the hour of temptation that shall come upon the entire world to test those who dwell upon the earth.
 11 Behold, I come in a flash! Hold fast to what you have, that no man steals your crown.
 12 Him who overcomes will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall no longer have to depart from it. I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God—the new Jerusalem—which comes down from my God in heaven; and I will write upon him my new name.
 13 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches.
 14 To the [Overseer] at the church of the Laodiceans, write: These things say the Amen...the faithful and true witness...the source of the things created by God:
 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were either one or the other!
 16 So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth,
 17 Because you say: "I am rich, and have an abundance of goods, and have need of nothing." All the while, you

thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

do not realize that you are, in fact, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

18 I advise you to buy from me the gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white clothing, that you may be dressed [in my righteousness], that the shame of your nakedness is covered; and obtain *my* sort of salve for your bad eyes that you may see!

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and punish, so be zealous, and repent!

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me.

21 To him who overcomes will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and have sat down with my Father on *His* throne!

22 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches.

1. The “**Seven Spirits of God**” may be a reference to the one Holy Spirit, though it could also be to seven angels that stand before the throne of God, mentioned in the apocrypha and Rev. 8:2. If of the Spirit, its point is to convey completeness in authority and presence.

2. The “**Key of David**” is mentioned in Isaiah 22:22 as being granted to Eliakim, the treasurer of Hezekiah. Language about him therein signifies the authority of a High Priest who also possessed delegated kingly authority. The analogy to Christ is that He is both High Priest and king by God’s command.

REVELATION CHAPTER 4

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty¹ elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts² full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders³ fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord,⁴ to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and

REVELATION CHAPTER 4

1 After this, I looked--and behold! A door opened up in heaven, and the first voice I heard sounded like a *shofar*. It talked to me, saying: Come up here, and I will show you things that must come to pass!

2 And immediately, I was [out of the body,] in the spirit, and behold--I saw a throne in heaven, and one sat upon the throne.

3 And He who sat upon it was dazzling as jasper and sardine gemstones; and there was a rainbow around the throne that looked like an emerald.

4 And encircling the throne were twenty-four thrones, and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and upon their heads were crowns of gold.

5 And out of the throne came lightning bolts, thunders, and voices. And there were seven menorahs burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 And in front of the throne was a sea of glass like crystal, and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four [sphinx-like creatures] with eyes in their front and in their back.

7 The first [sphinx-like creature] was like a lion. The second was like a calf. The third had a man’s face. The fourth was like a flying eagle.

8 And the four [sphinx-like creatures] each had six wings, and they possess eyes all about their bodies. These never rest, but day and night repeat the words: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

9 And when these [sphinx-like creatures] gave glory and honor and thanks to Him who sat upon the throne, who lives forever and ever,

10 The twenty-four elders fell down before Him who sat on the throne; and they worshipped Him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

11 You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honor and power--for you created all things, and for your pleasure

for thy pleasure they are and were created.

they exist, and were created.

1. The 24 elders probably represent the 12 tribes of Israel, and the 12 apostles.

2. Though translated “beasts,” the word is better rendered *living creatures*. The Egyptian word for the *Sphinx*, *She-sep-ankh*, meant a *living image* (while *sphinx* in Greek means *strangler*), and John seems to have observed a vision of sphinx-like creatures—i.e., a conglomeration of different creatures/angels, akin to those Ezekiel saw and wrote of. The paraphrase thus uses the term *sphinx-like creatures* in these passages. These angels may represent the tribes as they surrounded the tabernacle.

3. Traditionally, these elders have been viewed as the 12 Patriarchs and the 12 apostles, representing the Old and New Testaments.

4. “You are worthy” was a Roman acclaim for the Caesars, to which Domitian added the word “Lord.” By the way, the casting down of crowns in verse 10 refers to a practice of lesser kings laying their crowns down before Caesar to acknowledge his supremacy as king of kings. The whole sense of this section of Revelation is that God—not Caesar—is Lord of the earth!

REVELATION CHAPTER 5

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

REVELATION CHAPTER 5

1 And I saw a scroll that was written on both sides and sealed with seven seals being held in the right hand of God who sat on the throne.

2 Then I observed a powerful angel proclaim with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the scroll, and break its seals?

3 But no man in heaven, nor on earth, nor in *Sheol* was able to open the scroll or read it.

4 And I wept very much, because no man was found worthy to open the scroll or look in it.

5 Then one of the elders said to me: Weep not! Behold—the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to unroll the scroll, and break its seals.

6 And I looked, and there—in the midst of the throne and the four [sphinx-like creatures], and amidst the elders—stood a Lamb that looked to have been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God that are sent forth throughout the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of [God] who sat upon the throne.

8 When he took the book, the four [sphinx-like creatures] and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. They all had harps, and golden censers of incense, which are the prayers of the righteous.

9 And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals—for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every family, tongue, people, and nation;

10 And you have made us kings and priests unto our God—and we shall reign upon the earth.

11 And I looked, and I heard the voices of many angels round about the throne and the [sphinx-like creatures] and the elders; and they were innumerable—ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of them!

12 They said with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing!

13 And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and in *Sheol*, together with those in the sea—all that are in these realms—I heard saying: Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be to [God] who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!

14 And the four [sphinx-like creatures] said: Amen! Then the twenty-four elders fell down and did obeisance to Him who lives forever and ever.

REVELATION CHAPTER 6

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.
 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
 3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.
 4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
 5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.¹
 7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.
 9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:
 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?²
 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.
 12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

REVELATION CHAPTER 6

1 And I saw the Lamb open one of the seals. Then I heard a noise like thunder, which was one of the four [sphinx-like creatures] saying: Come and see!
 2 And I beheld a white horse, and he who sat upon him had a bow. A crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
 3 When he opened the second seal, I heard the second [sphinx-like creature] say: Come and see!
 4 And there went out another horse that was red, and power was given to him that sat upon it to take peace from the earth; and that men should kill each other—and he was given a great sword.
 5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third [sphinx-like creature] say: Come and see! And I beheld a black horse, and the man upon it had a pair of scales in one hand.
 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four [sphinx-like creatures] say: [One day's food for one day's wages]—and see you do not hurt the oil and the wine!
 7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth [sphinx-like creature] say: Come and see!
 8 And I looked, and beheld a sickly green horse, and the name of the man who sat upon it was DEATH—and *Sheol* followed him. Power was given them over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword, hunger, death, and with the wild animals of the earth.
 9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Message of God, and for the testimony that they had lived out.
 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?
 11 Meanwhile, white robes were given to every one of them, and they were told that they should rest for a little while, until their fellow servants and brethren who were destined to be killed as they were should complete what had been assigned for them.
 12 And I beheld, when he opened the sixth seal, a great earthquake. And the sun became black as goatskin, and the moon became red as blood.
 13 And the stars in the heavens fell to the earth even as a fig tree casts its fruit early when a great wind shakes it.
 14 And the heavens vanished like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island moved from its place [from the force of the earthquake].
 15 And the kings of the earth, and the important men, and the rich men, and the chief military officers, and the mighty men, and every slave, and every free man hid themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains.
 16 They said to the mountains and rocks: Fall on us, and hide us from the sight of God who sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!
 17 For the great day of His wrath has finally come, and who will be able to stand it?!

1. The reference here seems to refer to some sort of hyperinflation, where an entire day's wages will be required for a simple loaf of barley bread. The reference to the oil and wine is debatable, and could indicate that the rich will not yet be impacted. Others see this as referring to the activities of the Holy Spirit.

2. One might wonder why these souls would cry out for vengeance for their deaths when Jesus and Stephen forgave those slaying them. The reason is, the grace of God has run out for the sinners on earth, and now only God's wrath is left to pour out.

REVELATION CHAPTER 7

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

REVELATION CHAPTER 7

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that it should not blow on the earth, the sea, nor on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the Living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels who had permission to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying: Do not hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed--there were sealed a total of one hundred forty-four thousand from all the tribes of Israel.

5 From Judah were sealed twelve thousand. From Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. From Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6 From Asher were sealed twelve thousand. From Naphtali were sealed twelve thousand. From Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand.

7 From Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. From Levi were sealed twelve thousand. From Isachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8 From Zebulon were sealed twelve thousand. From Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. From Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

9 After this, I beheld a great multitude that no man could number from all nations, families, people and tongues standing before the throne and the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes, and had palm branches in their hands.

10 They cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!

11 And all the angels stood roundabout the throne, and about the four elders and the four [sphinx-like creatures]; and they fell before the throne on their faces and did obeisance to God,

12 Saying: Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be unto our God forever and ever! Amen!

13 And one of the elders answered, saying: Who are these dressed in the white robes, and where do they come from?

14 And I told him, Sir--you would know better than I! And he said to me: These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple--and He who sits on the throne shall dwell among them.

16 And they shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst, neither shall the sun shine on them with its heat.

17 For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to the fountains of life; and God shall wipe away all their tears from their eyes!

REVELATION CHAPTER 8

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.¹

REVELATION CHAPTER 8

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about a half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.
 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.
 5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.
 6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
 7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.
 8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire² was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;
 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.
 10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;
 11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.
 12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.
 13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

2 And I saw the seven angels that stood before God, and they were given seven silver *shofars*.
 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar who had a golden censer. He was given much incense with the intention that he should offer it, together with the prayers of the righteous, upon the golden altar that was before the throne.
 4 And the smoke of the incense, which arose together with the prayers of the righteous, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.
 5 And then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it to the earth. Then there were voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.
 6 And the seven angels with the seven *shofars* readied themselves to sound them.
 7 The first angel blew his *shofar*, and there came forth hail and fire mixed with blood--and they were cast upon the earth. A third part of the trees was burned up, along with all the green grass.
 8 Then the second angel blew, and [an asteroid] that burned with fire was cast into the sea; and a third part of the sea turned to blood.
 9 And a third of the creatures living in the sea died, and a third of the world's ships were destroyed.
 10 The third angel blew, and a great star fell from the heavens, burning like a lamp as it fell, and it struck a third part of the waters, and upon the springs of waters.
 11 The name of the star was Wormwood, and it turned a third of the earth's waters to [poison], and many men died because of the bitter waters.
 12 The fourth angel then blew, and a third of the sun was smitten, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars--and these grew dark. The daylight even did not show for a third of the time, nor was there light in the nighttime sky for a third of the night.
 13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the heavens, crying out with a loud voice, saying: Woe! Woe! Woe to the people of the earth for the *shofar* blasts of the three angels yet to blow!

1. This is a very puzzling verse, for praise is otherwise going on continuously!

2. The question here is whether or not this is literal. If it is, it appears to foretell that some sort of asteroid will impact the earth and devastate the sea and much of humanity.

REVELATION CHAPTER 9

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star¹ fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.
 2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.
 3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.
 4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.
 5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their

REVELATION CHAPTER 9

1 Now the fifth angel blew, and I saw a star fall from the heavens to the earth--and to this being was given the key to the Bottomless Pit.
 2 And it opened the Bottomless Pit, and a great smoke arose from it, and the sun and air were darkened from the great volume of smoke that arose from the Pit.
 3 And out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and they were given power even as the earth's scorpions have power.
 4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, nor any green plant, nor any tree--but they were only to hurt those men who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads.
 5 And they were commissioned not to kill those men, but to torment them for five months. And the torment

torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.
6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.
7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.
8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.
9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.
10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.
11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.
12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.
13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,
14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels² which are bound in the great river Euphrates.
15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.
16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.
17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.
18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.
19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.
20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:
21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

they underwent was like that of a scorpion that stings a man.
6 And in those days men shall seek death and not find it; and shall desire to die, but death will flee from them.
7 The shapes of the locusts were like horses readied for battle, and on their heads were what resembled crowns of gold, and their faces were like men's faces.
8 And the hair of their heads was like that of women's, and their teeth were like those of lions.
9 They had breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots and many horses charging into battle.
10 They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails; and their power was to harm men for five months.
11 And they had a king over them, the angel of the Bottomless Pit, whose name in Hebrew is *Abaddon*, and in Greek *Apollyon*.
12 One Woe is past, but look—two more Woes are to follow!
13 And the sixth angel blew, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God,
14 Saying to the sixth angel who had the *shofar*: Release the four angels who are bound in the great river Euphrates!
15 And the four angels were freed, who had been prepared for one hour, one day, one month, and one year to slay a third of mankind.
16 And the number of the horsemen was two hundred million—I actually heard this number!
17 And in the vision I thus saw the horses and those who sat on them, with their breastplates of fire, and jacinth, and brimstone. The heads of the horses were like lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.
18 By these three was a third of mankind slain—by fire, smoke, and brimstone, which came out of their mouths.
19 For their power is in their mouths and in their tails—for their tails were like those of snakes, and with the heads of those tails they hurt people.
20 And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues did not repent from the work of their hands, that they should not worship devils and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see, hear, nor speak.
21 Neither did they repent from their murders, nor their [drug abuse], nor their sexual immorality, nor their thefts.

1. We can only speculate on what this creature is. The creatures released from that Pit may be the beings/angels bound in Tartarus for their sins in the early years of Genesis; or else some of Satan's fallen angels who may have been bound before, or subsequent to, the creation of man.

2. These appear to be fallen angels since they are chained up.

REVELATION CHAPTER 10

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:
2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set

REVELATION CHAPTER 10

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed in a cloud. A rainbow was over his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet were pillars of fire.
2 And he had in his hand a little open scroll. Then he

his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,
 3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth:
 and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their
 voices.
 4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices,
 I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven
 saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven
 thunders uttered, and write them not.
 5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and
 upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,
 6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who
 created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the
 earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the
 things which are therein, that there should be time no
 longer:
 7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when
 he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be
 finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.
 8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto
 me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is
 open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the
 sea and upon the earth.
 9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me
 the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it
 up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in
 thy mouth sweet as honey.
 10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand,
 and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey:
 and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.
 11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again
 before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and
 kings.

set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the
 earth,
 3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars;
 and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their
 voices.
 4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their
 voices, I was about to write, but then I heard a voice
 from heaven saying to me: Seal up the things that the
 seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.
 5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and
 the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven,
 6 And swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who
 created heaven and the things in it; and the earth and
 the things in it; and the sea and the things in it that
 there would be no further delay!
 7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel,
 when he begins to blow, the mystery of God will be
 completed, as He has declared to His servants, the
 prophets!
 8 And the voice I heard from heaven spoke to me
 again, saying: Go and take the small scroll that is in
 the hand of the angel who stands upon the sea and the
 earth.
 9 So I went to the angel, and told him: Give me the
 little scroll. He replied: Take it, and eat it. It will make
 your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet
 as honey.
 10 So I took the small scroll out of the angel's hand
 and ate it up. As he said, it was sweet as honey in my
 mouth, but as soon as I had eaten it, my stomach was
 bitter.
 11 And he then told me, You must prophesy again
 before many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.

REVELATION CHAPTER 11

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and
 the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of
 God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.
 2 But the court which is without the temple leave out,
 and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and
 the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two
 months.
 3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses,¹ and
 they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and
 threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.
 4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks
 standing before the God of the earth.
 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of
 their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any
 man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.
 6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in
 the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters
 to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all
 plagues, as often as they will.
 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the
 beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make
 war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill
 them.
 8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the
 great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and
 Egypt², where also our Lord was crucified.
 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and

REVELATION CHAPTER 11

1 And there was given to me a reed like a ruler, and the
 angel stood by, saying: Rise and measure the Temple of
 God and the altar, and those who worship within.
 2 But the court that is outside the Temple, leave out
 and do not measure it, for it is given to the Gentiles.
 The Holy City they shall tread underfoot for forty-two
 months.
 3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they
 will prophesy, dressed in goatskins, for one thousand
 two hundred sixty days.
 4 They are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks
 standing before the God of the earth.
 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of
 their mouths and burns up their enemies. Anyone who
 harms them must be slain in this manner.
 6 They have the power to shut the heavens up so that it
 does not rain during the days they prophesy. They have
 power over the waters to turn them to blood; and they
 can smite the earth with plagues as often as they wish.
 7 When they have finished their testimony, the
 Behemoth that ascends out of the Bottomless Pit will
 fight against them and kill them.
 8 And their bodies will lie dead in the great city
 [--Jerusalem--] which is spiritually called *Sodom*, and
Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.
 9 And those of the earth--all its peoples--will see their
 dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and will not allow

nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.
 10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.
 11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.
 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.
 13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
 14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.
 15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.
 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.
 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.
 19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: ² and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

their dead bodies to be placed in graves.
 10 And those who dwell upon the earth will rejoice over their deaths, and will send gifts to each other because these two prophets had tormented those who dwelt upon the earth.
 11 But after three-and-a-half days, the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood up on their feet--and great fear fell upon those who saw them.
 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven say to them: Come up here! And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched helplessly behind them.
 13 Immediately, there was a great earthquake and a tenth part of Jerusalem fell; and seven thousand men died in the earthquake--and those who did not die were greatly afraid, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
 14 The second Woe is past, but the third Woe now comes quickly.
 15 The seventh angel blew, and there were great voices in heaven, saying: The kingdoms of this world have now become the kingdoms of our Lord God, and His Messiah--and He will reign forever and ever!
 16 And the twenty-four elders that sat before God on their thrones fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
 17 Saying: We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who is, and was, and is to come--because you have taken great power to Yourself, and have reigned!
 18 And the nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead to be judged; and that You should bestow rewards to Your servants, the prophets, and to the righteous, and to those, small and great, who reverence Your Name; and that You should destroy those who destroy the earth.
 19 And the Temple of God was opened in heaven, and in His Temple was seen the Ark of the Covenant; and there were lightnings, voices, thunderings, along with an earthquake and great hail.

1. Many theologians believe that Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses here. However, some mistakenly believe that Enoch, rather than Moses, is one of the Witnesses, based on the fact that Enoch--like Elijah--never died. However, there is an entire generation that will not see death, but will be brought up to meet Christ in the clouds, and so that theory about Enoch is largely unwarranted.
2. A common false teaching in the church is that, "Egypt represents the world." This is untrue. The Bible never teaches that, but instead here identifies "Egypt" as Jerusalem and its Christ-rejecting religious system! Rome is what--arguably--could be identified with "the world."
3. Here, we may see why Jeremiah 3:16 records that the Ark of the Covenant will never come to mind again, nor be missed--it may be in heaven, and not on earth.

REVELATION CHAPTER 12

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:
 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, ¹ having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught

REVELATION CHAPTER 12

1 And now there appeared a great wonder in the heavens: A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet; and upon her head was a crown of twelve stars.
 2 And she, being pregnant, cried out in labor pains, and began to deliver.
 3 And there appeared another wonder in the heavens: [Leviathan--] a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
 4 And his tail drew along a third part of the stars of the heavens, and he cast them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to deliver, intending to devour the child as soon as it was born.
 5 And she delivered a male child who would rule all

up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood, which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments² of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

nations with a rod of iron--and her child was caught up to God and His throne.

6 And the woman, meanwhile, fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared for her by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

7 Meanwhile, there was war in the heavens: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought back with his own angels.

8 But he did not prevail, neither could they remain in their Place in the heavens.

9 And now the great dragon was cast out--that old snake called the devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was cast down to the earth, and his angels with him.

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: Now is come salvation, strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Messiah, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down--the same one who accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and the Message of their testimony--and they did not love their lives, but submitted to death.

12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them! But woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath [because he knows his time is about up]!

13 And when the devil saw that he was cast onto the earth, he persecuted the woman who had brought forth the male child.

14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle so that she could fly into the wilderness to her own Place, where she would be nourished for three-and-a-half years from the face of the dragon.

15 And the dragon expunged a flood of water from his mouth after the woman, hoping to carry her away and drown her.

16 But the earth helped the woman, and opened its mouth, swallowing the flood that the dragon had cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was angry with the woman, and then went to make war against the remnant of her offspring, who keep the commands of God, and live and proclaim the testimony of Jesus Christ.

1. Though translated as "dragon," the creature is not a dragon of the sort we think of, but possibly a crocodile. It may correspond to "Leviathan," mentioned in Job and Isaiah. (In the Aramaic *Targums*, Job's Leviathan is actually called a crocodile.)

2. A false teaching from this verse arises in some quarters that John is talking about Mosaic Law. The commentary on 1 John 2:3 addresses this issue. I will also add that were John's intent to mean the actual Law, he would have simply said, "the Law of God," rather than "the commandment(s) of God." Also, if we look at his Gospel, John never uses the word "commandments" (*entole*) to specifically refer to the body of the Law; instead, he properly uses "Law" (*nomos*). Also, his use of *entole* often refers to morality, exhortation and lifestyle, rather than a list from the Torah, which fits the context here.

REVELATION CHAPTER 13

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as if it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the

REVELATION CHAPTER 13

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a Behemoth rise up out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns; and upon his horns were ten crowns, and upon his heads was the name of blasphemy.

2 And the Behemoth I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were those of a bear, and his mouth was that of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as if it were wounded to death. Then its deadly wound was healed, and all the

world wondered after the beast.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.¹

world was amazed at the Behemoth.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power to the Behemoth, saying: Who is like the Behemoth?! Who can make war with him?!

5 And his mouth was anointed to speak great things, and blasphemies; and power was given to him to continue forty-two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

7 And he was given power to make war against the righteous, and to overcome them. And power was given him over all families, tongues, and nations.

8 And all who dwell upon the earth shall worship him--those whose names are not written in the Scroll of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man can understand--let him understand!

10 He who leads [others] into captivity, shall go into captivity. He who kills with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Thus, the righteous must remain patient and in faith through it all.

11 And I beheld another Behemoth coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.

12 And he exercised all the power of the first Behemoth before him, and caused the earth and those who dwell therein to worship the first Behemoth, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from the heavens down to the earth in the sight of all men--

14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by means of those miracles that he had the power to do in the sight of the Behemoth. He said to those upon the earth that they should make an idol of the Behemoth, which had the wound made by a sword, yet did live.

15 And he had the power to give life to the idol of the Behemoth, that the image should both speak, and cause as many as would not worship its image to be killed.

16 And he causes all--both great and small, rich and poor, free and slave--to receive a mark on their right hand, or in their foreheads.

17 And no man could buy or sell except for those who had the mark, or the Behemoth's name, or the number of his name.

18 Now here is wisdom: Let he who has understanding decipher the number of the Behemoth, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666 [and 616].

1. The 3rd century Oxyrhynchus Papyrus is the oldest known copy of the Book of Revelation, and uses the number 616.

REVELATION CHAPTER 14

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

REVELATION CHAPTER 14

1 And I looked, and there stood a Lamb on Mount Zion, and with him were a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waterfalls, and like the sound of a great thunderclap. I also heard the voice of harpers playing their harps.

3 And they sang a new song before the throne, and the four beasts, and the elders. No man could learn that song except for the hundred and forty-four thousand

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.¹ These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

who were redeemed from the earth.

4 These are those who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes, and were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits unto God and the Lamb.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are blameless before the throne of God.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of the heavens, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to those who dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, family, tongue, and people.

7 He said with a loud voice: Fear God, and give glory to Him—for the hour of His judgment has come! Worship Him who made heaven, earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And there followed another angel, saying: Babylon is utterly demolished! That great city, because she made all nations drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: If any man worships the Behemoth and his idol, and receives his mark in his forehead or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink the wine of God's wrath, which is poured out in full strength into the cup of His indignation—and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever—and they have no rest day and night, who worship the Behemoth and his image, and who receive the mark of his name.

12 This is why the righteous must remain patient. Here are they who keep the commands of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: Write: *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from this point on.* Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. Their deeds follow them.

14 And I looked and beheld a white cloud, and one on the cloud sat, who looked like a human man. He wore a golden crown, and in his hand was a sharp sickle.

15 Then another angel came out of the Temple, crying with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud: Thrust in your sickle, and reap—for the time has come to you to reap. The dried up wheat of the earth is ready!

16 And he that sat upon the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the Temple in heaven, who also had a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar who had power over fire. He cried with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying: Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.

19 And the angel thrust his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

20 And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed out from the winepress that reached up even to the horses' bridles, one hundred-and-eighty miles long.

1. The virginity referred to means those who have not compromised the true faith with falsehood or impropriety.

REVELATION CHAPTER 15

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.
 2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.
 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.
 4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.
 5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:
 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.
 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.
 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

REVELATION CHAPTER 15

1 And I saw another sign in the heavens, great and marvelous: Seven angels having the last seven plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.
 2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had gotten their victory over the Behemoth, and over his idol, and his mark, and over the number of his name. They stood on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.
 3 And they sang the song of Moses the servant of God; and they sang the song of the Lamb, saying: *Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty--just and true are Your ways, You King of the righteous!*
 4 *Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your Name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments are revealed.*
 5 And after I had looked--behold, the Temple of the Tabernacle of Testimony in heaven was opened.
 6 Then the seven angels came out of the Temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden belts.
 7 One of the four [sphinx-like creatures] then gave to the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.
 8 And the Temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power. No man was able to enter into the Temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

REVELATION CHAPTER 16

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.
 2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.
 3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.
 4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.
 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.
 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.
 7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.
 8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.
 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.
 10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,
 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

REVELATION CHAPTER 16

1 And I heard a great voice out of the Temple saying to the seven angels: Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.
 2 So the first went out and poured out his vial upon the earth, and horrible, grievous sores fell upon the men who had the mark of the Behemoth, and those who worshipped his idol.
 3 Then the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man--and every living thing in the sea died.
 4 Then the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of water, and they became blood too.
 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say: You are righteous, O Lord, who are, and were, and shall be--because you have judged earth in this way.
 6 For men have shed the blood of the righteous and the prophets, and you have given them blood to drink in return. They deserve it!
 7 And I heard another angel out of the altar say: Indeed, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments!
 8 Then the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun, and power was given him to scorch men with fire.
 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, who has power over these plagues--and men refused to repent and give Him glory.
 10 Then the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the [political system and territories of] the Behemoth, and his kingdom was full of darkness; and people gnawed their tongues for the pain.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.
 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.
 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.
 15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.
 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.
 17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.
 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.
 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.
 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

11 And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.
 12 Then the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and its waters dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East.
 13 Then I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the Behemoth, and out of the mouth of the False Prophet.
 14 These are the spirits of devils working miracles; and they go forth to the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.
 15 [And Christ says:] Behold, I come as a thief! Blessed is he who watches and keeps his clothes on, lest he walk about naked, and his shame be seen by all.
 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in Hebrew, *Armageddon*.
 17 Then the seventh angel poured his vial into the atmosphere, and a great voice came out of the Temple in heaven from the throne. It said: It is done!
 18 And there were voices, thunders, lightnings--and there was a great earthquake such as had never happened since man had been on the earth. It was an earthquake beyond belief!
 19 And Jerusalem was divided into three parts, and the cities of the Gentiles fell; and great Babylon came to God's remembrance, that he would give her the cup of wine of the fierceness of His wrath.
 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains flattened.
 21 And there fell upon men a great hail from the sky, each stone weighing around seventy-five pounds! But men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for the plague was unbelievably great.

REVELATION CHAPTER 17

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither: I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:
 2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.
 3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.
 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:
 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.
 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.
 7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven

REVELATION CHAPTER 17

1 Then one of the seven angels with the seven vials came up and spoke to me, saying: Come here, and I will show you God's judgment against the Great Prostitute that sits on many waters,
 2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with whom the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality.
 3 So he carried me away in the spirit to the wilderness, and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, with seven heads and ten horns.
 4 And the woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and decked out with gold and precious stones and pearls; and she had in her hand a golden goblet full of abominations and the filthiness of her sexual immorality.
 5 And upon her head was a mysterious name that was written: *Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and abominations of the earth*.
 6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the righteous, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus--and when I saw her, I wondered with great amazement.
 7 Then the angel said to me: Why did you marvel? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and the Behemoth that carries her, which has seven heads and

heads and ten horns.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.¹

10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

ten horns.

8 The Behemoth you saw was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the Bottomless Pit, and go into perdition; and they who dwell on the earth--whose names are not written in the Scroll of Life from the foundation of the world--shall be amazed when they behold the Behemoth that was, and is not, and yet is.

9 And here is the mind that has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains upon which the woman sits.

10 And there are seven kings. Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he does appear, he must continue on for a short space of time.

11 And the Behemoth that was, and is not--even he is the eighth, and is from the seven, and goes into perdition.

12 And the ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not received a kingdom yet; but they receive power as kings for one hour with the Behemoth.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength to the Behemoth.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings--and those who are with him are called, and chosen, and are faithful.

15 And he said to me: The waters you saw where the prostitute sits are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns you saw upon the Behemoth--these shall hate the prostitute, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

17 For God has put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the Behemoth until the decrees of God shall be fulfilled.

18 And the woman you saw is the great city [of Rome] that reigns over the kings of the earth.

1. The identity of the Whore is a matter of speculation, as is the city over which she reigns. Many Protestants view this as referring to Rome and the Catholic Church. However, it should be noted that Vatican Hill is *not* one of the seven hills of Rome. Various rabbinic writings confirm that Jerusalem is also built on seven hills, as are other noteworthy places in the world such as Byzantium (i.e., Nova Roma/Constantinople/Istanbul), Babylon, and even Lisbon, Portugal, Amman, Jordan, and Washington, DC! However, the most reasonable view of these verses in context is that they refer to Rome and its system of emperor-worship.

REVELATION CHAPTER 18

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

REVELATION CHAPTER 18

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power--and the earth was lit up with his radiance.

2 And he cried out with a loud voice: Babylon the Great is utterly destroyed, and become the habitation of devils, and the place of every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hateful bird.

3 For all nations have drunk the wine of the wrath of her [spiritual and sexual] immorality; and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her; and the merchants of the earth have waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying: Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you do not receive her plagues.

5 For her sins have reached up to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double it--yes, double it again, according to her deeds! Give her twice what she gave others to drink!

7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come.

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

7 How much she glorified herself, and lived luxuriously--so give her torment and sorrow in return! For she said to herself, "I reign as a Queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow!"

8 Therefore, her plagues shall come forth in one day--death, mourning, and famine; and she will be utterly burned up with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

9 And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication with her shall bewail her, and grieve for her when they see the smoke of her burning,

10 As they stand afar off for the fear of her torment, saying: Alas! Alas! That great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment is come!

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their wares anymore.

12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all your wood, and all sorts of vessels of ivory, and all manner of vessels of most precious wood, and brass, and iron, and marble,

13 And cinnamon, and perfume, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and animals, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men,

14 And the fruits that your soul lusted after are departed from you--and all the things that were dainty and delicious are gone from you, and you shall not find them again.

15 The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

16 And saying: Alas! Alas! That great city that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls!

17 For in one hour all these great riches have come to naught. And every ship captain, and all the men in ships, and sailors, and as many as who made their living by the trade of the sea, stood afar off,

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning: What city is like this great city?!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying: Alas! Alas! For that great city that made everyone rich who had a ship to trade with her because of her wealth--in one hour, she is made desolate!

20 Rejoice over her collapse, you in heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her.

21 And a mighty angel took up a great rock like a millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying: Thus, with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall never be found again.

22 And the sound of harpers, musicians, and pipers, and trumpeters shall be heard no more in you! And no craftsman, regardless of his trade, shall ever be seen in you again; and the sound of a stone grinding grain will never be heard in you either.

23 And the light of a candle shall never shine in you at all; and the voice of a bridegroom and a bride shall never be heard in you again, for your merchants were the great men of the earth; and by your sorceries were all nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

24 And in her was found the blood of the prophets, and of the righteous, and of all who were slain upon the earth.

REVELATION CHAPTER 19

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:
 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.
 3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.
 4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.
 5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.
 6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.
 9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.
 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.
 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.
 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.
 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.
 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;¹
 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all

REVELATION CHAPTER 19

1 And after these things I heard the thunderous voice of a multitude in heaven, saying: Hallelujah! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power to the Lord our God!
 2 For true and righteous are His punishments, for He has judged the Great Prostitute that corrupted the earth with her [spiritual and sexual] adulteries! He has avenged the blood of His servants that she shed with her own hands!
 3 And again they cried: Hallelujah! And the smoke of the Prostitute ascended up forever and ever.
 4 And the twenty-four elders, and the four beasts, fell on their faces and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying: Amen! Hallelujah!
 5 And a voice came forth from the throne, saying: Praise our God, all you servants, and those who fear Him, both insignificant and mighty!
 6 And I heard what sounded like a great multitude that sounded like the roar of many waterfalls and the crash of many thunders, saying: Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!
 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready!
 8 And to the Bride was granted that she should be dressed in fine linen, pure and white, representing the godly deeds of the righteous.
 9 And [the angel] said to me: Write this: *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb!* Then he added: These are the true sayings of God!
 10 And I fell at his feet to do obeisance, but he said to me: Don't do that! I am a fellow servant of God with you, and with your brethren who know and live out the testimony of Jesus! Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the [revelation] of all that prophecy pointed to!
 11 And I saw heaven revealed, and there was a white horse, the rider of which was called *Faithful and True*--and in righteousness does he judge and make war!
 12 His eyes were as flaming fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man, other than himself, knew.
 13 And he was clothed in a cloak dipped in blood, and his name is: *The Word of God!*
 14 And the armies of heaven followed him upon white horses, and they were clothed in fine linen, clean and white.
 15 And out of his mouth goes a razor sharp sword for him to smite the [pagan] nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; and he treads upon the winepress of the fierce wrath of Almighty God!
 16 And upon his cloak and thigh is written a name: *King of Kings and Lord of Lords!*
 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun who cried out to the fowls that fly in the midst of the heavens: Come! Gather together for the supper of the Great God,
 18 That you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and

men, both free and bond, both small and great.
 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.
 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.
 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

mighty warriors... that you may eat the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, slave and free, and small and great!
 19 And I saw the Behemoth, and the rulers of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him who sat on the horse, and upon his army.
 20 And the Behemoth was taken, and with him the False Prophet who wrought miracles before him, with which he had deceived those who received the Mark of the Behemoth, and those who did obeisance to his idol. These two were cast alive into the Lake of Fire that burns with brimstone.
 21 And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sat upon the horse with the sword that came out of his mouth--and all the birds gorged upon their flesh.

1. See Luke 17:37.

REVELATION CHAPTER 20

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.¹
 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.² This is the first resurrection.
 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.
 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.
 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
 11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the

REVELATION CHAPTER 20

1 Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the Bottomless Pit and a great chain in his hand.
 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,
 3 And then cast him into the Bottomless Pit, and shut him up, and put a seal upon him, so he could not deceive the nations until a thousand years be fulfilled. After that, he would be let out for a short time.
 4 And I saw thrones, and people sat in them, and authority to judge was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Message of God, and those who had not worshipped the Behemoth, or his image, nor had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands. These all resurrected and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years had passed. This is the first resurrection.
 6 Blessed and holy is he who has a part in the first resurrection. On these, the second death has no power. But they shall be the priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him for a thousand years.
 7 And when the thousand years pass, Satan shall be released from his prison,
 8 And he shall go forth to deceive the nations on the four quarters of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them to battle. There are so many there that their number is like the sand of the sea!
 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the righteous, and the beloved city--but fire came down from God in heaven, and consumed them.
 10 And the devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the Behemoth and False Prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.
 11 And I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat upon it, at whose face the earth and heavens fled away--and there was found no place for them.
 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, stand before God, and the scrolls were unrolled, and another scroll was unrolled, which was the Scroll of Life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the scrolls, according to their deeds.

books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

13 And the sea gave up the dead in it, and death and *Sheol* delivered up the dead who were in them--and every man was judged according to his deeds.

14 And death and *Sheol* were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death.

15 And whoever was not found written in the Scroll of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

1. The author is among those who believe there will be a literal thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth, before the start of eternity. I won't go into the usual arguments for that, but I will give one argument no one has brought up before: If there is no Millennial Kingdom prior to the Last Judgment and eternity, that will mean that mankind, throughout the entirety of its history from the Garden of Eden to the White Throne judgment, will never have experienced human sexuality as God meant for it to be. Instead, man will *only* have known the perverted sexual drive fathered by Satan. This position is untenable in my view.

2. Those who deny a literal 1000-year reign of Christ must ignore or pervert this verse to uphold that doctrine.

REVELATION CHAPTER 21

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them,¹ and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to

REVELATION CHAPTER 21

1 And I saw new heavens and a new earth, for the first heavens and earth had passed away. There was also no more sea.

2 And I, John, saw the holy city--new Jerusalem--coming down from God out of heaven, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying: Behold! The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and "God with them" shall be their God!

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away!

5 And He who sat upon the throne said: Behold! I recreate all things! And he said to me: Write--for these words are true and faithful!

6 And He said to me: It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega--the beginning and the end. I will give freely the fountain of the water of Life to anyone who is thirsty.

7 Him who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.

8 But the fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, whoremongers, [drug-dealers], idolaters, and all liars will have their part in the lake of fire that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

9 And one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the last seven plagues came to me, and said: Come here--I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife!

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city--the holy Jerusalem--descending out of heaven from God,

11 Having the radiance of God--and her light was like a very precious stone, even like a jasper stone that was clear as crystal.

12 And it had a great high wall, with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the twelve gates. And each gate had a name of one of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13 On the east three gates, the north three gates, the south three gates, and the west three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he who talked with me had a golden reed to

measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.
 16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.
 17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.
 18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.
 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;
 20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.
 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.
 22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.
 23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.
 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.
 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.
 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.
 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

measure the city, its gates, and its wall.
 16 And the city is a square, with its length as long as its breadth. So he measured the city with the reed and it was fourteen hundred miles. Its length, breadth and height are all fourteen hundred miles.
 17 And he measured its wall, which was two hundred and sixteen feet, the angel using a human measurement of eighteen inches per cubit.
 18 And the building of its wall was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.
 19 And the foundations of the city wall were decorated with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second sapphire; the third chalcedony; the fourth emerald;
 20 The fifth sardonyx; the sixth sardius; the seventh chrysolite; the eighth beryl; the ninth topaz; the tenth chrysoprasus; the eleventh jacinth; the twelfth amethyst.
 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each gate was made of one pearl. And the streets of the city were pure gold like transparent glass.
 22 And I saw no Temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple of the city!
 23 And the city had no need for the sun or the moon to shine in it, for the radiance of God lights it, and the Lamb is that light.
 24 And the nations of those that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.
 25 And its gates shall not be shut by day, for there is no night there.
 26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.
 27 And nothing that defiles, or that which works an abomination, or makes a lie--but only they whose names are written in the Lamb's Scroll of Life shall enter it.

1. In the author's opinion, this awesome verse indicates that at the end of time, the dimension of heaven will actually merge with the physical universe, creating a perfect harmony of the physical and spiritual worlds in some manner we cannot even begin to fathom. With everything re-created in this manner, there will no longer be a need for either an earthly or heavenly "Temple" and propitiary intercession and service for fallen man. Christ will no longer have to intercede for humanity, for everything will exist in a state of divine perfection, with the Spirit indwelling and sanctifying all creation. It should also be noted that the earliest texts of Revelation are worded along the lines of the paraphrased verse, saying "God with them shall be their God," and the author has gone with this earlier rendering because it seems to harken back to Jesus as Immanuel ("God with us"), and is yet another good proof text for the deity of Christ.

REVELATION CHAPTER 22

1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
 2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
 3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
 4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.
 5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

REVELATION CHAPTER 22

1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.
 2 In the midst of its main thoroughfare, and on either side of the river, was the Tree of Life, which has twelve sorts of fruits, and gives fruit every month; and the tree's leaves are for the healing of the nations.
 3 And there shall be no more curse [upon creation], but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him.
 4 And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.
 5 And there will be no night there; and they need no candle, neither the light from the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.

6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.
 7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
 8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.
 9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.
 10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.
 11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.
 12 And, behold, I come quickly;¹ and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.
 13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.
 14 Blessed are they that do his commandments,² that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.
 15 For without are dogs,³ and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.
 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
 18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.
 20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

6 And the angel said to me: These sayings are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things that must shortly happen.
 7 Behold, I come in a flash! Blessed is he who keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
 8 And I, John, saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that had showed me these things.
 9 Then the angel said to me: Don't do that! For I am your fellow servant, and the fellow servant of your brethren, the prophets, and of those who keep the sayings of this book. Worship God!
 10 And he said to me: Don't seal up the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the epoch is at hand.
 11 He that is unjust--let him stay that way! He who is filthy--let him stay filthy! And he who is righteous--let him remain righteous. And he who is holy--let him remain holy!
 12 Behold! I come in a flash, and my reward is with me, to give every man according to his deeds!
 13 I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last!
 14 Blessed are they who wash their robes, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter through the gates of the city.
 15 For outside of it are "dogs," sorcerers, whoremongers, idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a lie.
 16 I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify of these things to you in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star!
 17 And the Spirit and the Bride say: "Come!" And let he who understands say: "Come!" And let he who is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of Life freely.
 18 For I testify to every man who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If he adds anything to these things written, God will add to him the plagues in this book.
 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Scroll of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things written in this book.
 20 He who testifies these things says: Surely I come in a flash! Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!

1. "Quickly," often in the epistle, does not denote when, but *how* Christ will be returning.

2. The best manuscripts have "**Wash their robes**"--referring back to Rev. 7:14--rather than "**Do His commandments**."

3. Some claim that, "Jesus never mentioned homosexuality." He didn't mention incest and bestiality, also forbidden in Leviticus. But here is where He appears to mention homosexuality, even using a "homophobic slur" ("**dogs**") from the Old Testament. While some try to force a narrow "man-boy" pederastic or male prostitute definition upon some verses denouncing homosexuality, neither Greek nor Hebrew had a specific word for *homosexual*, and *dog* was the only word *Jews* would colloquially use for it as the word was descriptive of immoral, Lawless people, fitting many Gentiles. (Likewise, the Greek words were the sorts that had to be used since there was no specific word otherwise.) Jesus, speaking in warning to Jews, would have known only one use for the word "**dog**" in a context of sin: homosexuality. So while the word *was* a slur for Gentiles, as they may enter the Kingdom, He must be referring to (unrepentant) homosexuals. Had Paul written this, we might debate otherwise, but given it is John and is a warning to all of us in all ages, there is no warrant to go beyond the word's colloquial use in the Jewish culture John and Christ were from, rather than Paul's Greco-Roman culture. When we note this is a grave warning to a specific group of unrepentant sinners, against whom a derisive cultural slur is directed toward, only homosexuality really fits the context.

Appendix I-- For Christian Jews (and Moslem converts) only

This section won't mean much to most Christians who own this Bible, but because the author associates with some elements of the Messianic Jewish movement, it is provided as an aid for Jews who have converted to the Christian faith. It may also be some use to those from a background of Islam, since Islam has many similar arguments against Christian doctrine.

While more Jews have converted to Christianity in the last few decades than in many centuries prior to that, conversion can carry with it serious repercussions. Within highly religious societies like those of the Orthodox Jewish communities, conversion carries with it the potential for complete rejection by family and friends.

One problem faced by a convert is in explaining the justification for his new beliefs to others in his community. Since most people don't begin their relationship with Christ as skilled theologians or apologists, it often difficult for them to give a well-reasoned justification for their beliefs that can't quickly be shot down by a trained anti-missionary. What follows will therefore address some common criticisms on the part of Judaism toward Christian theology, with a Scriptural or rabbinic response that the convert can use to justify his new beliefs. It is not written as a tool to proselytize Jews away from Judaism, nor should it be used as such. It is written only to aid a convert who has already made the choice to adopt the Christian religion.

First, the convert must understand that he needs to rationalize his new beliefs differently to his fellow Jews than he might a Gentile acquaintance, because the Jews--the sincerely religious ones, anyway--are already in covenant with God while the Gentile sinner down the street is not. Even so, while the Jews are in covenant with God, the New Testament teaches that they have rejected the most important part of that covenant: the Messiah.

Because of this fact of being in covenant with God, but yet resisting the One whom *we* believe is the Messiah, the Jews--according to the writers of the New Testament--are in a unique place, spiritually, that no other group is in. Paul states it this way:

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (Rom. 11:25)

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. (2 Cor. 3:14)

From a Christian perspective then, the Orthodox Jew who sincerely follows the teachings of rabbinic Judaism is simultaneously in partial covenant with God, while rejecting what the New Testament reveals is the *full* covenant with God. This results in a person who has an excellent understanding of the way God wants him and his community to live--so far as lifestyle goes--but who, at the same time, is hindered by what the New Testament reveals are flawed teachings on the subjects of sin, Messiah, atonement, and justification.

This is why an unbelieving Jewish person requires the intervention of the Holy Spirit to open his understanding to the Gospel in a way that differs from what the unbelieving Gentile needs. Most Gentiles must to be reached on the basis of being warned about sin, and the need of repentance to avoid the judgment of God.

On the other hand, the Orthodox Jew (a minority in the various streams of Judaism) is--from a human perspective--already walking uprightly, and is not in the position of an unrepentant sinner, though he needs forgiveness and atonement for his imperfections just as the most moral Gentile does. Because of this, the Jewish person's unbelief, with respect to the Gospel, differs from that of the sinner. The sinner's unbelief is one that usually traces itself to a lack of knowledge--or else scorn--regarding sin, righteousness, and the judgment of God. The rabbinic Jew is already familiar with these concepts, and respects them. His error is in rejecting the notion that the sacrifice of the Messiah was necessary for God to fully forgive all the consequences of the sins he commits over his lifetime. Thus, the religious, yet unbelieving, Jew is in a position where he has accepted part of God's truth, while rejecting another part that is revealed in the New Testament. His unbelief therefore stems not so much from a lack of knowledge as much as it does from a rejection of knowledge he is already aware of.

This is why an attempt to reach a rabbinic Jew on an intellectual basis with the Gospel is usually doomed to failure. Two thousand years of brilliant Jewish minds have made a science out of "proving" Jesus cannot be the Messiah, and a rabbinic Jew--who has a natural agenda to resist conversion--can easily find a reasonable argument to counter any claim made by a Christian if he is determined not to believe.

You see, on an intellectual basis, Christians and Jews look at the same words of Scripture and give them totally different meanings, causing what's black and white to one group to seem white and black to the other. The best example of this is the great passage of Isaiah 53. To Christians, those verses are obviously talking about Jesus Christ, the Messiah. To Jews, it is just as obviously talking about the Jewish people--and many Jews of today are incredulous at anyone seeing that passage referring to anything *but* the Jews as a people. (Never mind the fact that a number of sources in ancient Judaism also saw that passage referring to a 'suffering Messiah.')

So what follows will list some examples of Judaism's regular criticisms of Christian theology, and will explain how we arrive at a different understanding of the Scriptures than they. The arguments, of course, will not convince a Jew who is comfortable with a rabbinic understanding of Scripture to convert to Christianity, but they can be used to show the reasoning behind the *Christian* worldview of the Messiah that the convert has embraced.

Criticism: There is only one God, and accepting Christianity is accepting polytheism if one believes that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh.

Messianic response: This issue is the biggest stumbling block to rabbinic Jews in accepting the Christian religion. It was also a stumbling block to Jews in the 1st century as well, when they heard Christ proclaim things like, "**Before Abraham was, I AM.**"

But the New Testament clearly proclaims the nature of Christ as fully God while also being fully human. The doctrine of the Trinity was the best way some fallible human beings had of explaining concepts that are derived from an overview of the Scriptures.

When we get to heaven, we will understand perfectly the relationship of the Father to the Son, and I suspect we'll see how overly simplistic our doctrine on this issue actually was. In any event, the point must be made that Trinitarianism, despite the spin some people want to place on it, is a monotheistic--not polytheistic--doctrine. That aside for a moment, even if we totally divorce ourselves from the traditional Gentile Christian understanding of the nature of Christ, we can note that actual writers of the New Testament used Jewish concepts in their development of who and what Christ was.

The Book of Hebrews, for instance, refers to the divinity of Jesus in a Jewish manner when it speaks of Him in these words: **Who being the brightness of his (God's) glory, and the express image of his person....**

In much of Jewish thought, no one ever really saw God personally. In the Old Testament passages where Moses and the elders ate with God, or where God somehow visibly manifested Himself, what they were believed to have seen was the *shekhina* of God taking form upon the earth. The writer of Hebrews may be employing a similar notion when he calls Christ “**the brightness of his glory.**” This is almost certainly a phrase meant to call to mind what became understood to the Jews as the *shekhina* of God--and this writer was showing that Jesus Christ was the earthly manifestation of God, using the notion of the way the *shekhina* was thought to manifest in the Old Testament. John the apostle may have built on this notion as well when he says: **No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.** (John 1:18)

Even the *Targum* of Pseudo Jonathan, in its account of Genesis, proclaims that Adam heard not God, but the “**Word of God**”^{*} walking in the garden, just as John uses the same term about Christ in the opening of his Gospel.

^{*} Though John uses a Greek word with a Hellenistic connotation, his intent is to equate Jesus with the Hebrew concept and word *Memre*, which also means, “**word.**” “The Word of God,” by the way, is also the highest of the 10 *Sephirot* in Kabbalistic teaching.

Thus, the Jewish writers of the New Testament, even if they did not yet fully understand the Trinity, or use our language of it, understood Christ to be a visible representation of God, and tried to impart that understanding using concepts some Jews already were familiar with. Christians eventually developed their words into what we today call the Trinity (while others in Judaism invented the *Sephirot*), but whether one does or does not see the nature of God in the precise way Trinitarians do, the fact remains that the notion of God being manifested upon the earth and interacting with men, while still being enthroned in heaven, is entirely Scriptural, and in accordance with much of Jewish thought and tradition.

We must also make the point that many people do not understand what polytheism actually is to start with. Example: Zeus, Hera and Apollo are three polytheistic gods who live on Mt. Olympus.

The difference between polytheism and the Trinity is that the false gods of polytheism, like the Greek gods, lack the qualitative nature of the One God. The omnipresent Trinity exists simultaneously in the past, present and future, and throughout all of creation. Not so the gods of polytheism; they are localized in one place. If Zeus leaves Mt. Olympus, then Mt. Olympus is absent Zeus.

Not so with the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son or God the Spirit, being infinite, can manifest on earth in a form a human might see and interact with (Ex. 24:9-11), but in no way do they localize themselves in doing so as a polytheistic god would; they are still simultaneously omnipresent throughout all time and space. And because of their being equally omnipresent throughout all time and space, it would make no difference if there were a *hundred* Persons in the Godhead--all would equally be God! Thus, one God can have an infinite number of Persons/Personalities in the eternal Godhead if all are equal in nature, equally omnipresent, and if they can manifest independent or collective thought at will. Thus, they are not and cannot be independent entities, but must comprise a single compound entity.

In our case, our “One God” has three Persons in the Godhead, and that is *not* polytheism.

Then, when the second Person of the Trinity incarnated and came to earth, He took on an additional human nature, and thus--as God did in the Old Testament--He has a human form, albeit a permanent one, that men can see and interact with. But at the same time, He retains all the omniscience and omnipresence of God, and thus is never less than fully God, while also being fully human, thus having two natures.

And that is the heart of the Trinity.

Now let's deal with Judaism's *own* flirtation with 'polytheism' for a moment. The Kabbalistic writings of Chassidic Judaism in their concept of the 10 *Sephiroth*, or "divine Emanations" from God could, if a person wished to interpret and pervert them as such, be construed as attributing inappropriate polytheistic qualities to God.

The *Zohar*, for example, one of the most important Kabbalistic books, even has a section (Zohar, Vol III, 288; Vol II, 43, Hebrew edition. Also Soncino Press, Vol III, 134) that sounds as if a Trinitarian could have written it, referring to the 'three heads of Yahweh that are united into one,' and that this mysterious triune existence of God can only be understood through revelation of the Holy Spirit!

That sounds very Trinitarian to me, and if I chose to pervert what the passage actually means, I could label it as some sort of heretical polytheistic teaching even if my doing so insults and denies the claims of those from whom the teaching comes, who alone have the true right to define what it actually means. The problem then becomes not that of the doctrine itself, but the theological or philosophical imposition I take upon myself to *place* on the teaching.

This is precisely what Jewish outsiders do with the doctrine of the Trinity.

Now let's turn to the Old Testament itself. In it, we see some problematic passages as well that call into question the supposedly "clear" teaching that God is "**One**" to the exclusion of being triune. These verses, in the *Jewish* Scriptures, are part of the basis for our deriving the notion that while God *is* one, He reveals Himself as something more than that based on the text as written. Here are examples:

Gen. 16: Hagar speaks to the "**Angel of the Lord**," and this angel promises to multiply her seed, yet the text in verse 13 calls this angel the "**LORD**" (YHWH).

Exodus 3: Shows it was the "**Angel of the LORD**" in the bush, yet again, "**the LORD**" is the one who dialogues with Moses.

Judges 2: The "**Angel of the LORD**" claims to be the one who promised to free, and then delivered, the Hebrews from Egypt, when we know it was *God* who accomplished the act.

Judges 6: The same "**Angel of the LORD**" commissions Gideon, yet verses 14, 16, and 22 refer to this angel as the "**LORD**" (YHWH).

We could go on, but the point is, one can argue that the Jewish Scriptures themselves present as much polytheistic language and problems as the New Testament that Judaism rejects! Yet the truth is that neither faith believes in polytheism; it is the erroneous conclusions by those on the outside looking in that get *touted* as polytheism, and the great difference is in how we view those problematic verses. Mainstream Christianity, of course, solves the problem by concluding that God is a triune being. Judaism rejects that and comes up with its own theology, such as claiming the "**Angel of the Lord**" is possibly the archangel Metatron (Enoch) speaking a message *from* God, a position which has no basis in Scripture at all, but only from extra-biblical Jewish writings and speculation.

Judaism thereafter labels Trinitarianism as polytheism despite its being a monotheistic doctrine that simply differs from Judaism by its conclusion that a triune nature exists in one supernatural being

who cannot fully be explained by finite human words and wisdom in the first place, instead of relying on the creation of imaginary angels to explain away problematic verses and language in the Scriptures.

Criticism: Jesus didn't fulfill many of the Messianic prophecies, so clearly he isn't the Messiah. The idea that Jesus is a true Messiah who will some day return and fulfill what he failed to do the first time is inconsistent with Jewish beliefs.

Messianic response: As everyone is aware, Christianity teaches that Jesus is one Messiah who came first as a "suffering Messiah" to deal with the subject of sin, and who will come a second time as a kingly Messiah to establish the Messianic Kingdom. While it's true that no one in the time of Christ was looking for one Messiah to come twice, there were enough contradictory prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah that some Jewish movements believed that *two separate Messiahs* were coming: One, a suffering Messiah; the other, a conquering Messiah. The concept of one Messiah coming twice is thus a slight modification of a belief that was perfectly orthodox in the 1st century. Only later did Judaism dogmatically pronounce that one Messiah was coming one time, reconciling things like the contradiction between the notion that the Messiah would triumphantly ride into Jerusalem on a white horse with a prophecy of Zechariah that he would arrive meek and lowly on a donkey by concluding that if the people were righteous, the Messiah would arrive on the horse, but if unrighteous on the donkey.

Such is how far rabbinic Judaism will stretch to create a rationale to deny Christian teachings.

(By the way--even today, the idea of one Messiah coming twice is not out of the question to some in Judaism, for many of the followers of the great Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, claim that he came first as the *Messiah ben Joseph*, and that God will resurrect and return him as the conquering *Messiah ben David*! One Orthodox Jew I know was even in a conversation with a follower of Schneerson's a while back, and made the comment that if you had substituted the words "Jesus Christ" for those of "the Rebbe" in the conversation, you would have thought it was an evangelical speaking of the second coming of Christ!)

Even if we again distance ourselves from normal Christian doctrine on this issue, there is a quick, sound answer as to why Jesus "didn't fulfill the Messianic prophecies": The Jewish leaders rejected His kingship, and had Him crucified!

Just as happened repeatedly in Old Testament times, the man of God came to call the people to repentance, and to follow God's way for them. The elders didn't like the message or the messenger, and had him killed. Then they foolishly declared that since the man hadn't fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies, that was proof he must not *be* the Messiah!

Well, the sad truth is Jesus the Messiah arrived to do all of that the first time, but for the fact that the Jewish leaders had Him crucified, so it was their fault--not Christ's--that they did not receive what they'd been promised!

Since God Himself didn't enact the good He wished to do for the Jews when they rejected and slew the Old Testament prophets, by what logic could anyone think that God would do the good He'd promised to do through the Messiah if the people to whom the Messiah is sent have Him crucified? One need only read Jeremiah to see what good things God promised to do if the people would repent. They didn't repent, so they didn't get the good God promised them. It was their fault, and *only* their fault, that they missed out! This did not make Jeremiah a false prophet.

Remember also the Hebrews, to whom Moses was sent with a promise that God would give them rest in the Promised Land. Did God keep that promise? No! He had to constantly be talked out of

destroying the Jews by Moses, and in the end the very people who'd been given the promise of a good land were consigned to death in the wilderness, and it was their children who actually got the promise.

Did that make God a liar? Did that mean God wasn't really God because He didn't fulfill the promise as He'd stated it? No! It revealed that the people disqualified themselves from the promise by their actions, and the promise was put off for a whole generation of time.

So we see in the Jewish Scriptures themselves an entire generation who'd been promised things by God fail to receive the very thing they'd been promised! Likewise, the Messianic prophecies were forfeited when the leaders of the Jews refused the Messiah Himself. Those promises will still happen, just as the *children* of the Hebrews received the promise made to their disqualified *fathers*--but the fulfillment of those promises has been delayed until a generation of Israel arises that will repent. Once Israel does repent, according to Paul they will usher in the Messianic Age and be adopted directly as sons and daughters on an individual sense, rather than in a corporate sense as a nation.

Even the Messianic Age that will be ushered in will be greater than the one originally promised, for the entire earth will be under the rule and blessing of the Messiah, and the worship of God will be perfected in a way that it never could have been under the limitations of the Mosaic Covenant that caused a natural separation between God and man, and Jew and Gentile, because of sin.

Criticism: The idea of God's employing a "human sacrifice" to atone for the sins of mankind is a direct violation of the Torah, which specifically forbids human sacrifice of any sort! Even if that were not true, one man cannot atone for the sins of another; each man must atone for his own sins!

Messianic response: The foretelling and legitimizing of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is indeed outlined in Leviticus 27:29. Jesus, by John the Baptist's own proclamation, was the "**Lamb of God**," whom God Himself had reserved as a sin offering. Thus, Jesus had to die according to Leviticus, and this was entirely lawful for God to institute even if it was unlawful for the Jews themselves otherwise.

Now while Judaism, faced with an uncomfortable verse, would try and assert that this portion of Leviticus is either talking about heathens the Israelites were told to kill off as they entered the Promised Land, or else that it refers to condemned criminals, the text of the entire chapter makes it clear that it is speaking about *sacrifices vowed or devoted to God*, which is what Jesus ultimately was! This is why Jephthah was bound by his vow. Thus, he was forced to make his own daughter a *human sacrifice* because the Torah could not provide a way around the requirement of Lev. 27:29!

In contradiction to rabbinic thoughts on the matter, we also see later, in 2nd Samuel 21, when David executes Michal's innocent sons for *Saul's* sin, their human deaths were accepted by God as atonement for the sins of their grandfather against the Gibeonites, thus ending a divine famine--another direct contradiction to what the rabbis typically claim is possible!

Elsewhere in the *Tanakh*, Job was required to intercede for his friends to avert God's wrath against them (Job 42:8), and earlier than that (Job 1:5), he had offered up sacrifices to atone for his children in the event they had sinned. Moses likewise (Exodus 32:30) offered to make atonement for the sins of Israel.

Further, during the festival of *Sukkot*, 70 bullocks were sacrificed for the sins of the (obviously unrepentant) Gentile nations. We thus can overwhelmingly establish that, contrary to what Judaism teaches, the death of one or more innocent human men can indeed be accepted by God as atonement for the sins of others, and/or that a man can offer atonement for the sins of someone other than

himself. Since Christians believe that Jesus was the agent of mankind's creation, how much more appropriate would His own sacrifice be to atone for the sins of the children *He* had fathered than Job's sacrifices for his own children!

Even rabbinic Judaism occasionally lets slip some notions of the death of the righteous atoning for the sins of others despite its usual denial of the concept. Solomon Schechter, in *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, for instance, pointed out that: "*The death of the righteous atones just as well as certain sacrifices*"; and, "*This readiness to sacrifice oneself for Israel is characteristic of all the great men of Israel, the patriarchs and the prophets acting in the same way, whilst also some Rabbis would, on certain occasions, exclaim, 'Behold, I am the atonement of Israel.'*" Rashi himself, meanwhile, noted that the death of the righteous, '*atones like the sacrifices.*'

Thus, while Judaism on one hand makes a dogmatic claim that no one can atone for another's sin, and that God could never accept human blood as some sort of atonement, the Scriptures and teachers of the Jews themselves repeatedly prove otherwise!

Criticism: *The notion the Jesus could take sin upon himself, and atone for it, is ridiculous. No one can take another person's sins on himself.*

Messianic response: Again, the Scripture (Lev. 10:17) quickly shows how false this notion is, for the sons of Aaron were rebuked for not eating the sin offering, and thus taking the sins of the people upon themselves to make atonement for them! Elsewhere in the *Tanakh*, we know that the Azazel goat used in the *Yom Kippur* ceremony had the sins of the people transferred to it when the High Priest laid hands on the animal. The goat was then taken out and cast into an abyss, taking the sins of the people with it.

Clearly then, the principle of a person or animal having the sins of the people transferred to it in some manner is again in complete harmony with what the Jewish Scriptures show.

Criticism: *The New Testament, especially the writings of Paul, teaches the false notion that we need a Savior because we cannot keep the Torah. God Himself (Deut. 30:12) disagrees and says that we can indeed keep His Torah--and we do! Thus, Christianity is based on an unbiblical premise that contradicts the words of the Tanakh, and must be rejected because it is actually very simple to keep the commandments of God.*

Messianic response: On the occasions I've gotten into a discussion with a rabbinic Jew (and even some deceived "Christians") on this issue, the conversation usually goes something like this:

Me: "The ease of keeping the Torah is why the history of the *Tanakh* is a chronicle of the Jews faithfully keeping that Torah, and walking with God, right?"

RJ: "No, but as the Scriptures say, we can indeed follow His commandments if we love Him."

Me: "So you personally do keep the Torah, even though the New Testament says that you do not?"

RJ: "Absolutely."

Me: "You are without sin then?"

RJ: "Well, no."

Me: "Well, can you name me any Jews who have never failed in keeping the Torah, and were thus sinless?"

RJ: "Undoubtedly, some of the great sages and prophets."

Me: "You mean like David, who said, '**If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?**' (Psalm 130:3); or Isaiah who said, '**Woe is me! For I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips**' (Isaiah 6:5) Or Solomon, who said, "**There is no man that sinneth not**" (1st Kings 8:46)?

RJ: "Look, no one's perfect, and God doesn't *expect* perfection! That's where you Christians miss it!"

Me: "So you admit that you do at least *sometimes* violate the Torah."

RJ: "Okay, on rare occasions, being human, I have failed in some minor way to *perfectly* keep the Torah--but it's almost always unintentional, and when I become aware of it, I immediately pray for forgiveness."

Bingo! There is the fatal flaw. Even the most pious Jew, unless he's hopelessly deceived, will admit that he has broken the Torah in one way or another at some point in his life. And even if the violation is entirely innocent and unintentional, Lev. 5:17 reveals the principle that God requires the person to bear the iniquity of that unintentional violation of the commandments!

And so, as James points out (James 2:10), if you keep all of the Torah, but fail in one small point, you have broken the Torah--period! Thus, no man will ever stand before God and say, "I have kept your Torah." He may say, "I tried to keep your Torah" or, "I kept your Torah most of the time," but that is the best he will be able to claim.

And from God's perspective, the Jews have *never* kept the Torah to His standards, as shown by what He would have done for them if they *had*:

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers:

And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee.

Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.
(Deut. 7:12-15)

At no time in the history of Israel has God ever kept this promise. The closest He ever came was when the people left Egypt with no sick among them--and this was before the Law had been given! From that point, generation after generation, Jews have been just as sick as Gentiles, and even today if you were to look at the top of the list of the healthiest people on earth, they are Gentiles, not Jews!

This fact, if no other, shows that--contrary to what they claim--the Jews have never kept God's Law, and the evidence of that lies in the fact that God has never kept this promise to *them*.

Now while Jews will take offense and deny this, God even affirms in their own Bible that His people never keep His Law:

Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them:

Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. (Jer. 7:25-28)

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them.... (Malachi 3:7)

“But didn’t God say there were kings and people who *did* keep the Law to His standard?”

Here and there were people of good heart who kept the Law to an acceptable *human* standard. But Israel--as a nation--never did, and no *person* has ever kept it to the degree they do not need a savior to redeem them from their sins. And the ultimate reason for this is that *God’s* standard is not, as they think, “Just do the best you can,” but: **Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.** (Deut. 27:26)

Yet Jews, from the ultra-Orthodox, who keeps 180 or so of the 613 commandments, down to the Reform who may keep 0 to 50 of them, will all vehemently deny this, and claim they *are* keeping the Law to God’s standard. But either they are imperfect, willful sinners like the rest of us--and *do not* keep the Law to the standard demanded by a perfect God--or God is a liar.

The truth, of course, is that every human being capable of rational thought willfully violates the commandments of God at some point because of his own selfish will or human weakness, and he requires God’s forgiveness. The debate, from that point, is on precisely how God can *grant* that forgiveness.

Judaism, having lost its Temple and the priesthood in the 1st century, had to come to grips with the fact that the mandated sin offerings in the Law were now impossible to perform. This created a problem for them. But rather than accept Christ, who had prophesied the destruction of the Temple and the fact that the Jews would die in their sins if they rejected Him, they turned to the teachings of Jochanan ben Zakkai, who asserted that divine forgiveness is based on repentance, prayer, and giving alms, rather than blood sacrifice. To support this, they looked at a variety of instances when God forgave the Jews because of their repentant hearts, rather than through some form of animal sacrifice. Thus, they concluded that blood sacrifice and a Temple were unnecessary for God to forgive sin.

Although that teaching is partially true on some levels, the problem is that God has established one ultimate means of forgiveness of sin for humanity as a whole to be reconciled to Him, and if a person willfully rejects the method God has put in place in favor of a substitute system, his sins cannot be forgiven no matter how sincere he may be. While a good deed or some sort of temporal repentance on one’s part for wrongdoing may avert God’s *temporal* punishment for sin (1 Cor. 11:31), the *eternal* consequences follow after, and those consequences can only be atoned for and avoided by the blood of the Messiah. Judaism itself comes close to acknowledging this concept when it admits that an evil man may do a *mitzvah* and stave off God’s temporal punishment for some of his sins, but the man still dies with his name written in the *Book of the Unrighteous* because he is an evil man!

The Old Testament also shows, starting from Cain and Abel and going on through the time Aaron’s sons perished when they sincerely--but inappropriately--offered an unapproved sacrifice before the Lord, that God demands people to respond only in the manner He has mandated. According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the “legal” means of atonement God has provided that permits Him to forgive sin when asked--but the sad fact is, if any person rejects the vehicle for atonement that God has given in favor of another way that sounds good to them, their sins remain even if they ask for forgiveness! (Remember the principle shown in Lev. 5:17--even if the error of rejecting God’s true atonement is accidental and unintentional, the sin arguably remains!)

This is why Jesus warned: **I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.** (John 8:24)

It’s akin to prisoners inside a jail who are offered a blanket pardon if they’ll agree to accept it. Some of the prisoners accept it and are freed; others reject the pardon on the grounds of principle, but trust

to the goodness of the authorities to release them from prison anyway because they are sorry for the wrongs they did which sent them there.

The first group, no matter how much worse they may have broken the law, is freed because they were willing to accept the legal pardon; the second group must stay in jail because they absolutely refused the pardon, but hoped for mercy anyway.

The Christian position regarding the legal means by which God can forgive sin is, of course, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Whether in Old Testament times or New, there was never any other way; it was always God's looking forward or looking backward to the ultimate atoning sacrifice that He would accept and grant mercy on that basis. (Note that Rabbinic Judaism denies God's need for a "legal" justification to forgive sin, relying on the notion that God is sovereign, and will simply forgive because He can.)

Now one might ask whether there is any other proof outside of Scripture that we can offer to support Christian theology on these issues. Ultimately, there are none that would convince Judaism, but even their own Talmud (Yoma 39b) records that red wool tied to the *Yom Kippur* goat, that would turn white to signify the sins of the people had been forgiven, never turned white again after 30 AD! Apparently, Judaism did something in 30 AD that caused God to retain the sins of the Jews as a people from that point forward.

The only significant event of 30 AD was the Crucifixion of Christ!

Conclusions:

- 1--No one *truly* keeps the Torah; everyone breaks it at some point.
- 2--Everyone needs God's forgiveness for the sins they do commit.
- 3--One must accept forgiveness on the basis God offers it or he doesn't get the benefits of it.

Criticism: Jesus was not sinless; he clearly violated the command not to harvest on the Sabbath, and he healed non-life-threatening diseases on the Sabbath. He also refused to follow the commandments of the elders, and was in rebellion to the established religious authorities.

Messianic response: The point about harvesting on the Sabbath is dealt with in the commentary on Matthew, where I point out that Jesus' disciples, not Jesus Himself, were doing the harvesting; and that harvesting was in accord with the *halakhot* of Galilean sage Judah bar Illai. As to healing on the Sabbath, the miracles of healing were done under the power of God, not by Jesus' own intrinsic power, and God Himself thus gave His stamp of approval to healing a sick person of non-life-threatening disease on the Sabbath since the Torah does not specifically forbid it.

As to rejecting the authority of the elders, Jesus was no more bound to submit to the authority of the Pharisees or the Sanhedrin than Moses was. The Sanhedrin claimed to trace its origin to the elders appointed by Moses, and since the Messiah is the '**prophet like unto Moses**' that the people were required to hear, lest they come under judgment (Deut. 18:15-19), the Messiah obviously holds Moses' own authority and, like Moses, has the right to approve, modify or reject any ruling by the elders subordinate to him. Only a fool would hold that Moses was helplessly bound to accept any possible ruling made by his subordinate elders even if he vehemently disagreed with them. Jesus thus was perfectly within *His* right to put aside the *takkanot* and *gezeirah* of the elders *He* disagreed with. From a Christian perspective, at the point the Sanhedrin formally rejected the Messiah, its authority over the people was abrogated anyway, and thus the Jews were not, and are not, required to submit to its authority if the rulings from that body contradict the teachings of the Messiah.

Criticism: *Christianity teaches anti-Semitism and the rejection of the Torah, which God clearly gave to the Jews as a perpetual covenant. How could a Jew convert to Christianity, and still call himself a Jew?*

Messianic response: It is not Christianity itself, but the ignorance of some within Christianity that teaches anti-Semitism. In other sections of this book I go over the background of how Gentile Christianity has lost touch with the original system in place during the 1st century, which roughly parallels the beliefs of Judaism to this day: The Jewish Christians remained Torah-observant (Acts 21:20) while Gentiles were allowed to worship God and keep a lesser set of commandments (Acts 15). The misunderstanding on the part of both Christianity and Judaism traces itself to Paul's apparent de-emphasis of keeping the Torah in his writings. Even though Paul says that observant Jews who accept Christ should remain Torah-observant (1 Cor. 7:18), and that Gentiles should not try to mimic Jews in keeping a Torah one must really be brought up in from childhood to understand properly, a misunderstanding has developed that presumes Paul was teaching that the Torah should be rejected by everyone who comes to Christ. (What must actually be rejected is the notion that God *requires* Torah observance in order to be saved, or to be pleasing to Him.)

The fact is, there was an important segment in Judaism of the time that consciously believed a person obtained eternal life *only* by keeping the Torah, which is the idea Paul was constantly fighting against. In contrast to what most Christians think based on their misunderstanding of the Gospels, Jews today do not follow a crass system of works righteousness as these Pharisees did in the 1st century. Many Jews today believe, similarly to Christians, that eternal life is the gift of a loving God, and that we walk in His commandments because we love Him--not necessarily because we earn eternal life by obeying those commandments.

In the time of Christ, however, the dominant influence in Judaism were Pharisees from the school of Shammai, which held a far more rigid view, believing that one *obtained* covenant with God by keeping the Torah, whereas their counterparts in the school of Hillel believed one was born into the covenant and then only *maintained* that covenant by keeping the Torah.

The Shammaiites died out in the revolts against Rome, leaving their more reasonable counterparts in charge of Judaism. However, Gentile Christians, as they began outnumbering the Jews in the faith, were ignorant of the background history of all this, and thus they imposed their incorrect conclusions on New Testament writings, presuming that the Jews of later centuries believed the same things that the Shammaiites of the 1st century believed. The Jews thus faced persecution at the hands of historically illiterate Gentiles who disobeyed the teachings of Christ and committed murder in Christ's name in the belief that they were doing God a service.

Now on a philosophical basis, while Judaism itself on one hand claims that the Torah of Moses is to be in existence and in force perpetually, here and there the sages themselves speculated that the Torah would be altered or restricted in various ways during the Messianic Age. Maimonides, the Tosafists and the *Shulchan Aruch*, for example, speculate that the commandments will be modified, or even cancelled, in the Messianic Age or after the Resurrection (see Tosafists on Niddah 61b).

Wasserman writes that those in the Resurrection are freed from the obligation of keeping many of the commandments (Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, *Kovetz Shiurim*, vol. 2, Ch. 29). This may be akin to what Paul may have concluded about an aspect of Christian baptism: that the symbolic death, burial, and resurrection, in some sense, freed one from the mandated requirement to keep all the Torah now that the kernel of the Messianic Age had sprung forth (see Romans 6:4-14).

Converted Jews brought up in an observant lifestyle--who may be so indoctrinated in it that they would literally believe themselves to be sinning if they violate it--may thus retain Torah observance despite the fact God does not accept them on that basis. This isn't necessarily hypocrisy; it can be a

question of remaining faithful to one's tradition and culture, despite some incorrect theological beliefs on the part of either the Jews or their non-Christian brothers, and/or potentially avoiding violating one's conscience. Twenty years after the Crucifixion, for instance, James was still keeping the Torah despite the fact it played no role in his being adopted by God as a son. Until 135 AD, the believers in Jerusalem did likewise. If they had no problem with it, no Jewish believer of today who also wants to live in the manner in which he was raised should feel prohibited from doing likewise, nor should he be called a hypocrite, lest we have to call James and the first 13 Christian bishops of Jerusalem hypocrites as well. The error is to deny that the Law has been fulfilled in Christ and teach one is *obligated* to keep it in order to be in right standing with God. (And even so, much of the *Mishpatim*--specifically, the moral commandments of the Law in it--still apply in every generation, for God has implanted knowledge of those sorts of commandments in the heart of every man as Paul indicates in Romans 1 and 2.)

And so the Torah--as a binding covenant, based on keeping hundreds of extraneous points of minutiae--has, as Christianity teaches, been fulfilled by the Messiah for us, and there is no absolute *obligation* for a Jew, or anyone else, to follow it, just as most modern Jews today, who are less observant than their ultra-Orthodox brethren, would affirm there is no absolute duty to keep *all* the same commandments their ancestors kept hundreds or thousands of years ago.

So far as Jews following Christ *and* remaining Torah-observant goes, Justin Martyr perhaps summed it up best by his response to Trypho the Jew, who asked if a convert could be a true Christian and yet keep the observances and institutions of Moses: "*Such a one will be saved if he does not strive in every way to persuade [Gentiles] to observe the same things as himself, telling them that they will not be saved unless they do....*"

Criticism: *Jesus disobeyed the commandment to be fruitful and multiply by not taking a wife, so He was in rebellion to what God commands for men.*

Messianic response: This is one of the weakest arguments, but one I've heard more than once. I might point out that it's recorded that, "If someone devotes himself to the study of the Torah like Simeon Ben Azzai, his refusal to marry can be condoned." (*Shulchan Aruch* EH 1:4)

Appendix II--

Demonology: What the devil can do

Note: While the author was heavily involved in Spiritualism and the occult decades ago, his intention is not to draw too heavily upon his own actual experiences in presenting information on demons and demonology. Instead, this article will discuss the devil and demons primarily from a biblical basis since the Bible itself gives plenty of information on what demons can do.

Many Christians lack a conscious understanding of the reality of Satan and the demonic realm. The truth is, most of Christianity has a sanitized view of the devil because we cannot see demons any more than we can angels. Thus, the average Christian gives them little, if any, thought--and opinions on how active demons are range from the sublime to the ridiculous. Some extremists hold that the devil was so completely defeated at the cross that he now has no power whatever, while extremists on the other side of the issue blame demons for their cars running out of gas. The fact is, the Demonic realm is closer to us than the heavenly, for the Bible is clear that Satan is the “**god of this world**,” and his minions affect the lives of all beings, working through not only unsaved people, but even through some carnal Christians to bring about the devil’s goals. Beyond that, good Scripture-based teaching on the subject is hard to come by. This is partly because the Old Testament, barely mentions the subject, and the New Testament records encounters with demons without offering much in the way of instruction on how Christians are to handle the subject in their everyday lives. Thus, the Bible is not a how-to manual, leaving much open to speculation.

“Why should we talk about the devil? Shouldn’t we just focus on how great Jesus is, and not glorify the devil by talking about him?”

That’s just what the devil wants. Paul said: ...**Lest Satan should take advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.** (1 Cor. 2:11) Christians are to be aware of, and educated on, the reality of their enemy, not keep their heads in the sand, naively presuming that God will protect them from the devil without their standing in whatever capacity their maturity in Christ requires.

The origin of the devil and his demons.

The origin of the devil and his *angels*, is reasonably clear: Satan, then known as Sammael (and not Lucifer*) was a chief angel who became proud, and rebelled against the rulership of God. He was then cast out of heaven with the angels who followed him (Isaiah 14). These angels, along with him, have been banished to our physical universe and the earth, and it is here where they operate invisibly under the command of their master, now called Satan, or *adversary*.

* The name *Lucifer* comes from the Vulgate, in which Jerome used the Latin term for “Dawn-bearer” to refer to the Morning Star when he translated the Isaiah passage. This caught on, and came to be viewed as a proper name, and from this came the mistaken belief that Lucifer was the pre-fall name of the devil.

Why did they rebel?

The Bible isn’t fully clear on this. The devil became proud, wanted to be like God, and led a rebellion. That much we know. Better details aren’t provided. My speculation--it would be unfair to call it doctrine because there isn’t enough Biblical evidence to know--is that Satan presumed he would be given charge of the terrestrial universe when it was created, then became jealous and offended when God created Humans, what he would have viewed as an inferior species, to rule over it.

It's possible humans were created because angels lacked one thing humans would possess: an ability respond to God in *love* whereas angels did not and could not. Thus, angels were inferior to them in that way, and Satan could not grasp that.

(There isn't one verse of Scripture anywhere in the Bible, by the way, that ever says angels actually "love" God!)

Theologians stumble over this issue. Some will start talking about Natural love vs. Elective love and things like that, but the fact is, angels have no true capacity to love as we do. They can reverence and honor God as a Private can render honors to a General. They can serve God. Obey God. Are awed by God. Are faithful to God. But it seems they do not feel *emotional* love for God. Any "love" they might have is likely along the lines an intellectual sort based on Who and What God is to them, His attributes, their fear of Him, what they draw from Him, and what He does for them. It is not really heartfelt or emotion-based because they don't have that capacity as a part of their intrinsic nature. (Though they may have tried to counterfeit it in Genesis 6.)

As an Asperger's, I have some understanding of the issue.

Only creatures of the terrestrial universe have the capacity to respond in heartfelt emotional Agape love, a much higher level of love than any intellectual "love" that angels might be able to produce. Your faithful dog, in fact, has more of a capacity to love God than Michael or Gabriel does because even a dog can feel a small degree of loving emotion, while an angel simply cannot.

Angels apparently can choose to hate--but the word "love" is never applied to them, nor can they independently reproduce their own kind so Humans are a vastly superior--while vastly weaker--creation that may have earned Satan's jealousy.

But whatever the case, and for whatever the reason, Satan and a number of spirit beings rebelled against God and were cast down from where they were into lower dimensions where they either dwell or are bound in until their final judgment.

Just what is a demon?

The question arises as to whether what we call demons are actually the fallen angels of Sammael, or something else. It's impossible to know for certain. The strongest Scriptural view would be to presume that they are fallen angels of varying degrees of power and evil. The apocryphal Book of Enoch, which Jude quotes from, claims several origins for demons, including that some are the spirits of human-angelic hybrids slain in Noah's flood. Others believe they are the spirits of creatures who lived on a pre-Adamic earth that sided with Sammael in the rebellion and was destroyed by God before the earth of Adam was formed. It is impossible to know how much, if any, truth is present in these theories. I personally lean toward the idea that demons, are distinctly different creatures from fallen angels, and that the angels who followed Satan in the rebellion hold positions of authority over them, acting as *principalities*, *powers*, and *rulers* (Ephesians 6). (Or *all* his minions may have a terrestrial origin for all I know.) But ultimately, the truth on the matter is unimportant, for Christians have authority over all the powers of the enemy (Luke 9)--devils, demons, or whatever!

The purpose of demons.

The purpose of demons is to accomplish the devil's plans for the earth as a means of self-preservation. Satan's minions know that a time has been appointed for them to be judged and cast into hell (Matthew 8), and they work against humanity in hope that by using their influence against

mortals with free will, they may frustrate the plan of God and thereby prolong or guarantee their continued existence.

How they do this.

They do this by influencing and manipulating unsaved people to act in ways that promote the devil's plans through influencing thoughts, emotions, and actions, which they are apparently able to do--even in the case of some superficial, non-committed Christians (Luke 22:3, Acts 5:3)!

The powers demons have, and what they are able to do.

The Bible lists a number of things Satan, and by extension his minions through their master's power, are able to do--at least on occasion:

Turn sticks into living snakes by working through demon-worshipping people using magic spells (Exodus 7:11).

Poison waters, killing the life within them, by working through demon-worshipping people using magic spells (Exodus 7:22).

Summon a plague of frogs upon the land by working through demon-worshipping people using magic spells (Exodus 8:7).

These first three instances occurred when Moses was trying to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. Apparently Egyptian priests were able to duplicate these effects to a limited extent through what the Bible says were magic spells. Some modern theologians take the view that these so-called miracles were nothing more than tricks, and thus not supernatural in origin. The problem with that view is that the text does not use language stating that. Terms such as that the magicians "appeared" or "seemed" to create snakes, etc., is not there, and it is obvious that the writer believed they duplicated these effects through magic, not trickery. Second, trickery would seem insufficient to duplicate the latter two miracles on a scale sufficient to appear comparable with what God did through Moses on a countrywide scale. Also, the point came when the magicians could no longer keep up with Moses, even failing to duplicate a plague of lice (which presumably could have been faked as well). Thus, to take the view that these were not miracles with a demonic origin compels us to contradict the Scriptures at face value and conclude that the writer was penning the text from a position of human ignorance rather than under the direct inspiration of God. (Skeptics could use the same logic to question half the miracles Jesus did--attributing them to psychosomatic healings, and so on, to delete the idea of their being supernatural as well.) Thus, if we take the Scriptures as written, a principle emerges that it is possible for humans who serve false gods (ultimately the devil) to enact at least some supernatural effects by ritual magic, although the Scriptures also indicate this cannot happen without God Himself allowing it to. Several hundred priests of Baal, for instance, were unable to call down fire to consume a sacrifice when in a contest against Elijah as shown in 1st Kings 18.

Was this because the devil was unable/unwilling to do this? No--clearly it was because God wasn't going to allow it!

Some questions arise in this matter. For one, if we assume the veracity of the Scriptural report of Exodus 7, does that mean the devil is capable of creating life? Not necessarily. Rather than literally transforming a dead stick into a living snake, it may be possible that what happened was that some sort of conjuration occurred where a real snake from somewhere on earth, through demonic help, was transported to the Pharaoh's court. Or, two demons may have been conjured and appeared in the form of snakes. It's even possible that *God* made the snakes appear. All this is speculation, of course; we can't know for certain. All we can do is accept that something did happen, and deal with the greater principle that emerges.

Can such demonic miracles be duplicated today? If so, they are not typical of the world of the occult. In India, mystic Sathya Sai Baba has reportedly produced “miracles” close to what we see the Pharaoh’s magicians doing, but the evidence is hardly conclusive.

This is not to say that those who serve the devil (in whatever guise he may take) in the world of the occult have no access to demonic power. Be one a Wiccan, Spiritualist, Satanist, etc., the power of the supernatural is available to practitioners to a small extent. Ultimately the devil’s minions can cooperate with deceived human channelers, psychics, mediums, etc., on a limited basis in their own self-interest. For the most part, such demonic involvement results in little more than a few carrots of prophecy, prosperity, or “good luck” being dispensed to one who involves himself with such powers, often under the belief the force behind it is anything but satanic.

So far as using ritual magic to enact a “curse” on someone, the Bible doesn’t specifically mention this. However, if we deal with the principles involved, there is no reason not to believe in the theoretical application of a curse. Demons harass everyone with or without a “curse” being placed upon them anyway, and if someone involved in the occult happens to use ritual magic to direct extra demonic activity toward someone, there is nothing (apart from God’s sovereignty) prohibiting the devil from ordering some of his finite number of minions off one person they may be harassing to affect someone else with extra harassment. The good news for Christians is that the Psalms show that angels also surround us, and even if the demonic activity against us increases, God may well counter this with an increase of angelic activity on our behalf. (Remember, He theoretically has infinite numbers of angels compared to the devil’s finite number of demons.)

As will be noted in the following section, the Bible teaches that demons can affect humans physically, so it may theoretically be possible, through ritual magic, to cause some sort of illness or medical problem to come upon someone. I stress this is not through any “power” an occultist has in himself—it is only through the devil’s choosing to cooperate in the matter for his own purposes, something he could readily do without ritual magic being involved. At the same time, the devil clearly has some limitations on him with respect to inflicting illness on people. (Obviously, if he could, the devil would sic cancer on every Christian—and the fact this doesn’t happen shows that God places limits on him, and/or that the devil’s capacity to inflict death, apart from in a general sense, is limited by the number of his demons capable of this power.)

It’s difficult to know for certain whether a “curse” can be placed on a Christian since the Bible doesn’t specifically address the subject. But the strongest Scriptural position would be to hold that Christians are *not* subject to curses (Proverbs 26:2). I’ll admit I am not 100% convinced of that based on some things I’ve seen and experienced, but the Scriptures lean toward the idea that the Christian is not subject to demonic forces sent against him from outside sources, though all Christians will certainly encounter various demonic harassment in their everyday lives on a general level.

Use unsaved humans to steal property, and murder (Job 1:15,17).

Cause “fire” to fall from the sky, and burn to death people and animals (Job 1:16).

Cause a strong wind to destroy property, and kill people (Job 1:19).

Cause physical disease and illness (Job 2:7, Luke 13:13).

The four above examples are found in the book of Job. Job is interesting for the fact that the devil acknowledges that a hedge of divine protection surrounds God’s faithful servant Job. To afflict Job, the devil must first secure God’s specific permission, and beyond that may have required God to grant him power above what he normally had in order to generate some of the supernatural effects the book speaks of. This idea is based on Job 1:11 where the devil asks God to stretch out His (God’s) hand to afflict Job, possibly showing that the devil himself lacked the innate power to cause

“fire” to fall from the sky without God’s granting it to him. Presumably the devil needed no additional power from God to cause a band of Sabeen raiders to fall upon Job’s herds and make off with them after killing his servants, illustrating the principle that the devil exercises control over world governments and leaders (see Matthew 3:8) that do not acknowledge God, being bound only by the constraints of God in manipulating these governments in the direction the devil wants them to go.

Inspire a servant of God to sin and bring judgment upon both himself and those over whom he is in charge (1st Chron. 21:1). This sad event occurred when David apparently was tempted by the devil (with God’s permission) to conduct a census of the Jews. The devil may have appealed to David’s pride, tempting him to boast in the power of his kingdom; or the devil may have tempted David with doubt, causing him to abandon his confidence in God and instead focus his confidence in the size of his armies. The punishment for David’s sin was that God sent a plague upon Israel, killing tens of thousands. (Ironically the census was not technically illegal for David to hold, but his lack of detailed knowledge in the Law of Moses caused him to take the census without paying a Levitical redemption tax, which resulted in the act becoming sin, and judgment following.)

Some principles emerge in the above instance. David was king over Israel and by his sin otherwise innocent victims endured the judgment of God. To me, this suggests that we Christians need to understand spiritual authority and become aware that when we sin or rebel against God, we may place ourselves in a position outside the hedge of protection mentioned in the book of Job, causing judgment of one sort or another to affect not only us, ourselves, but possibly our children, church congregation, employees, etc. In connection with this, I know of a case where a pastor fell into adultery. Soon thereafter, a teenage girl in the church became pregnant and another was raped. The Holy Spirit revealed to another pastor on staff that these events were occurring because a spiritual hedge of protection was (partially) broken because of the pastor’s sin, allowing the devil an inroad. The events stopped when the pastor was confronted, and repented. Now this story doesn’t prove that well-meaning, sincere Christians will suffer for another person’s misdeeds, but more likely it suggests that Christians on the outer edge of commitment who may, without realizing it, enjoy some hedge of protection from the devil by their committed elders, can quickly pay a price for their own superficial commitment if that hedge comes down.

Delay one’s prayers from being answered, even after God has heard the prayer and agreed to respond (Dan. 10:12). This is a curious event that stands in direct contradiction to the way we usually think God works. In our minds, we assume that when God decides to do something--poof--it happens instantly, at His perfect time, without the devil being able to hinder it. On some levels that may be true, but the passage in Daniel suggests that God can issue an answer to a Christian’s prayer through an angelic intermediary--and the manifestation of that answer can be delayed for weeks or longer by some sort of spiritual conflict we aren’t aware of. One might argue whether after the triumph of the cross this sort of heavenly struggle between God’s angels and the devil’s demons still occurs, but I wouldn’t take for granted that the struggle has ceased. Certainly if Daniel had become discouraged and stopped praying, we can assume he would never have received his answer. The moral: We need to pray and praise until we get the answer.

Cause worldwide spiritual blindness and deception (2 Cor. 4:4). John Carpenter once made a science fiction movie called *They Live*. I recommend you watch this movie the next time you get a chance. The premise was that aliens had infiltrated earth’s society, masking their presence while sending subliminal, semi-hypnotic messages to humans that caused society to act in ways that would ultimately cause its own self-destruction. The movie’s hero finds a pair of high-tech sunglasses that permit him to see through the various guises of the aliens, and to detect the hidden messages on everything from billboards to dollar bills that show what they are trying to influence people to do.

This is an example of the devil's greatest accomplishment--worldwide deception on the part of those who do not know Jesus Christ. This deception, brought about through the sin of Adam, causes us humans to naturally have attitudes and thoughts that contradict God's will--and it takes the power of God, in cooperation with our yielding to the Holy Spirit, to alter our minds to begin thinking God's way.

Cause physical blindness and muteness (Matthew 9:32, 12:22, Luke 11:14). These incidents show Jesus encountering men who had become blind and/or mute through some sort of demonic possession. Interestingly, the degree of possession seems to have been limited to causing physical debilitation rather than causing the men to be under full demonic control.

Cripple someone (Luke 13:11, John 5:5). These are two interesting episodes. In the first, Jesus heals an infirm old woman whom He calls, "**A daughter of Abraham.**" In contrast to what some theologians say, nowhere does He mention sin, and we are left with no clarification about how the demon came to affect her--so to dub this woman a sinner when the text does not specifically lead us there is unwarranted, unfair, and an example of twisting the Scriptures when one's theology is threatened.

The incident at the Pool of Bethesda stands in stark contrast, however. Here, a crippled man is healed by Jesus who warns him to, "**Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.**" We can see here that through sin--probably sexual--this man, in this particular instance, acquired a crippling debilitation caused by a demon. Additionally, Jesus reveals that it is possible for God to deliver someone from such demonic affects and then have him receive back even worse if he once again falls into the same ungodly lifestyle that got him in trouble in the first place! Interestingly, while some teachers dogmatically take the position that Christians cannot possibly "have demons," Jesus does not step up to support that doctrine by calling on the man to follow Him in order to keep from being brought back under demonic bondage; He only mentions refraining from sin which, while not conclusive, leads credence to the idea that Christians who drift into sin can indeed become susceptible to at least some demonic effects.

Return once cast out (Matthew 12:43). In this passage, Jesus teaches that it is possible for what He calls an "**unclean spirit**" to return to the person it was cast out from after a period of wandering about in an unsuccessful search for a habitation. As if this isn't bad enough, the spirit returns with seven other demons** "**more wicked**" than itself, and the hapless person is that much worse off.

** This may be a reference to the spirit's returning with enough power and influence to completely bring its former host under bondage, rather than a suggestion that eight independent entities literally take up habitation in a human host.

This somewhat perplexing passage has given birth to a doctrine taught within Christianity that to prevent this, one must be "filled with the Holy Spirit" after having had a demon cast out, the idea being this prevents a demon from re-entrance into its former host. There's nothing overtly wrong with that concept, however we must note that Jesus doesn't use terms like that, nor does He confirm the idea by stating something along those lines. Instead, as we see in John 5:5, He gives the rather practical advice to one delivered from a demon to merely refrain from falling back into sin. Thus, we might gather that the strongest hedge against demonic re-intrusion is simply to obey the commandments and fill our lives with the things of God. But certainly, in the case of an unsaved individual who somehow is delivered from a demonic influence, acceptance of Christ by faith, followed by baptism, is a prerequisite to staying free. As a side-note, we might also speculate as to the theoretical possibility that some people who have received "healing" who later endure a repeat of their symptoms may first be experiencing a deliverance from illness caused by demons and then a re-emergence of the symptoms as the spirit attempts to return.

Create a deadly storm (Matthew 8:23). The New Testament doesn't specifically state the sudden storm on the Sea of Galilee was demonic in origin, but the Greek text does use language showing it was suspiciously intense, and that Jesus "**rebuked**" it. Thus, the storm may well have been traceable to an attempt of the devil to kill Jesus. Keep in mind the devil caused a strong wind in Job 1 to blow a house down on Job's children.

Grant supernatural strength to someone they possess (Matthew 8:28, Acts 19). Two instances are recorded that show three demon-possessed men were able, through supernatural strength, to snap chains or throw off as many as seven men trying to restrain them. However, the unfortunates who were possessed in these cases were under the complete demonic control of spirits.

Possess animals (Matthew 8:32). In this instance, Jesus encountered one or two men apparently possessed by numerous demons who gave them the ability to snap chains that were used to try and restrain them. When the demons were cast out, with Jesus' permission they took control of a herd of pigs, driving them into the water to drown. This doesn't prove conclusively demons are able to possess animals at will, but we do note the incident may indicate that demons have this ability. Interestingly, pigs are an unclean animal in Judaism, which causes me to wonder whether demons can inhabit a biblically unclean animal at will. There is insufficient data to speculate further. (If I go beyond the Bible to the world of the occult, I would say that demons can definitely inhabit animals, but since I am trying to stick to what the Bible indicates on demonology, I must take the position that it cannot be presumed that demons can inhabit animals, and that this must be viewed as a unique occurrence since permission was sought and granted them to do this.)

Possess children (Matthew 15:21, 17:14). An incident is recorded in the Gospels of a Gentile woman coming to Jesus whose daughter was "**tormented by a devil**." From a distance, Jesus "**heals**" the child (presumably casts the demon out). Later, a distraught father brings his demonized son to Jesus because the apostles cannot cast out a demon that appears to be inflicting what look like epileptic seizures on the child. These incidents show conclusively that children can be possessed by demons. The first case is relatively simple to dissect: The mother was probably an idolater, and it is easy to believe that at some point this child may have been exposed to some of the ritualistic practices of her people, and that a demon possibly entered into it at that point. The second case is more difficult to judge. Here, a Jew brings his son to Jesus for deliverance. This man would have been familiar with the Torah and presumably would not have been involved in overtly idolatrous practices. Thus, the Bible gives no information on how the boy acquired a demon. (It should again be noted that more liberal theologians deny this incident was one of demonic possession, but only a case of epilepsy. The text, however, clearly says it was demonic in origin, and that's what we must go with.)

Inspire a superficial Christian to lie to God and bring judgment upon himself (Acts 5:3). The Book of Acts records the incident of two Christians, Ananias and his wife Sapphira, who in imitation of Barnabas and others, sold some of their land and brought the money to donate to the apostles. However, these two kept back some of the money while claiming to have brought it all.*** Peter rebukes Ananias for this and states that Satan has '**filled his heart**' to lie to the Holy Spirit. Ananias, and later his wife, drop dead on the spot after this. This instance reveals that it is possible for the devil to tempt superficial Christians into acts of selfishness and unbelief that can cause some sort of divine judgment to fall upon them.

By the way, for those who wonder why the miracle power of God isn't seen as strongly now as in Bible days, one reason is that God's judgment would be just as close to us as His blessing would be, and there would be a whole lot more examples of Ananias and Sapphira as God judges sin in the church in a way He restrains Himself from now doing.

*** Part of the sin in this was that people in the early days of Christianity who gave all their goods in this manner to the church thereafter were put on a dole and had their needs met from church funds. Thus, Ananias and Sapphira were not only lying about what they were giving, but were also cheating the church as well.

Predict the future (Acts 16:16). Acts 16 tells of an interesting episode in the life of Paul where a slave-girl with a demonic spirit of divination begins following him and Silas, loudly proclaiming some true facts: That they were servants of God who had come to town to preach the way of salvation! The girl does this for quite some time until Paul finally casts the demon out of her, getting thrown in prison for the act. There's lots of meat in this incident. First, it is evidently possible for demons, despite what some think, to speak truthfully. Second, the word in the text showing that this girl was possessed is different from the standard word for being possessed, and suggests that the demon didn't have control of her--she had control of the demon!**** Third, the text asserts that demons have at least limited ability to foretell the future. Primarily this ability for "divination" traces itself to the devil's ability to process information and make calculated guesswork on future events, rather than some magical ability to actually "see" into the future. The devil, through his intermediaries, knows, for instance, what is discussed in the board rooms of major corporations and in the Oval Office so it is no great feat for him to make a judgment on what general events will transpire based on his own plans and influence over humanity. This is in stark contrast to God, an unlimited being who exists simultaneously in our past, present, and future. God sees before Him the entire panoply of time, and prophesies to us through that ability. The devil, who is finite like us, (probably) can only exist from moment to moment, and thus his ability to "see" into the future is based on little more than speculation based on analysis of information, and his own plans. If his powers exceed that--and it's not absolutely impossible that they do--then they don't exceed it by very much (the devil himself wasn't even able to foresee the resurrection that would defeat him three days after the Crucifixion, for example).

**** In other words, she had willingly attached herself to this spirit, or entered into a pact with it, rather than unintentionally having come under its domination through sin or occult practices. We can also speculate that her purpose in seeming supportive of Paul was to present herself as a supporter of Paul's in anticipation of moving into any fledgling church after his departure to bring it under her own influence.

Cause homosexuality (Romans 1:24). While not explicitly mentioning demons, Paul relates that through worshipping idols, it is possible for people to fall into homosexuality. Elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that those who practice idol-worship in fact are making offering to demons (1 Cor. 10:21), and the reasonable inference is that there can be a demonic cause for some people's homosexual tendencies.

Bind through fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15). This is a difficult passage to understand. The writer alludes to people perhaps being unable to fully enjoy a fruitful life because of a fear of death and dying. Certainly, it's true that in the ancient world death was by no means viewed as a pleasant experience. Of the cultures that believed in an afterlife, the majority viewed it as an unpleasant wandering in a shadow world. Perhaps the best point to be drawn from this passage is to keep in mind that Jesus Christ, through his death on the cross, has given mankind an assurance that this life is only the preparation for glory in the hereafter, and that no one need fear death for that reason.

Sift (Luke 22:31). This is a favorite tactic of the devil--isolate an individual Christian in whatever way possible, and single him out for temptation, oppression, and ultimately destruction.

Devour (1st Peter 5:8). The devil's most vulnerable target is the Christian who has been sifted out from the main Body of Christ, who doesn't go to church nor establish relationships with other Christians, just as the enemies of the Jews during the Exodus took advantage of stragglers away from the main group, killing or capturing them. Once in this position, the devil continues to attack his victim until he wears the person out and causes him to fall away from Christ through discouragement or sin.

Tempt (Gen. 3, 1st Chron. 21:1, 1 Thess. 3:5). We're all familiar with this! The devil knows our weaknesses, and uses the world system we live in to tempt us into sin through appealing to the desires we may have that are in contradiction to God's way of doing things. However, 1 Cor. 10:13 reveals that God will not allow the devil to offer more temptation than we are capable of resisting.

Thwart (1 Thess. 2:18). This speaks to the fact that the devil, again through the world system he operates and the unwitting humans he has influence over, opposes those who would do the work of God, frustrating their plans, and throwing hindrances in their way.

Create lying signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:8). This passage by Paul speaks of the coming Antichrist, who will deceive the world by, among other things, some sort of false supernatural miracles. We can go ahead and debate what or who the Antichrist is, but the point we're dealing with here is to note that Paul acknowledges that the devil is capable of enacting miracles of one sort or another through his servants. (Recall Pharaoh's magicians.)

Some other traits of demons include: *causing jealousy* (Numbers 5:14); *depression* (Isaiah 61:3); *torment* (Matthew 18:34); *bringing into bondage* (Romans 8:15); *falsely enlighten* (2 Cor. 11:14); *seduce* (1 Timothy 4:1); and *cause fear* (2 Timothy 1:7).

The demonic hierarchy.

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul provides a difficult-to-define hierarchy of the demonic realm, which includes:

Principalities. These are apparent overlords (generals, if you will) over specific nations. If you refer back to Daniel 10, you'll see an example of "**the prince of Persia**," one of these overlords, who restrained the angel Gabriel for 21 days from reaching Daniel with the answer to his prayer.

Principalities are likely fallen angels.

Powers. These may refer to demonic forces in charge of specific territories or cities within a larger state. In classic Judaism, *Powers* were considered to be the angelic entities through which God worked to accomplish His will. Paul may have concluded there was a demonic counterpart. *Powers* may also be authorities in the heavens over lesser spirit beings.

Spiritual wickedness in high places. This possibly refers to elemental spirits of the heavens, who in ancient mythology were thought to push the stars around. Or Paul could be referring to the influences upon unsaved people--like Nero--who influence them to promote the devil's plan for mankind.

The average demon soldier does not appear to be listed in any of these categories.

"Where do things like ghosts or UFOs fit into the scheme of things?"

They don't. There is no Scriptural validation for ghosts or intelligent life on other planets. As regards ghosts, the Bible indicates that once one dies, he either goes to be in the presence of God or else, like the rich man in the parable, he awakens in an unpleasant "holding tank" (usually called *hell*) in preparation for the Last Judgment, when he will be cast into the Lake of Fire. Certainly there are legions of reported encounters by people with what they believe to be "ghosts," and I assure you that many of these reports are legitimate. However, what's being seen are not the spirits of the departed, but demons masquerading as such.

In the case of UFOs, they have always gone hand-in-hand with the occult, and the claimed messages from extraterrestrials never harmonizes with the Bible. If such craft really exist (and I tend to believe they do), they either have a terrestrial explanation, are demonic manifestations, trace themselves to fallen angels interfering with humans (as in Genesis 6), or else--as a final slim possibility--are alien spacecraft piloted by fallen, soulless life forms akin to animals with exceptional, demonically-anointed intelligence.

“How do you know there cannot be intelligent life on other planets that God created?”

Because the entire universe fell into corruption and decay through Adam’s sin (Rom. 8:20-21), because Jesus took the form of humanity only to save mankind, and not some sort of alien beings (Heb. 2:16), and because the entire universe at Christ’s return will be destroyed and re-created (Matt. 19:28, 2nd Peter 3:7, 10-11).

It is an utter impossibility for independent, intelligent life forms to exist outside of earth unless their origin traces itself to Satan’s direct interference with, and subjugation over, a fallen creature that God first created. If the day ever comes when extraterrestrials make contact with humanity, they will be acting under the direct orders of Satan himself to deceive and subjugate humanity to their master’s control through the Antichrist and his system either by encouraging submission to it, or under the pretext of that man and system “defending” earth against alien invaders.

“Who can be possessed?”

This is not an easy question to address. To answer it, we must first understand that the word *possessed* is not in the Bible. Rather, the word we translate as *possessed* more literally means *demonized*. *Demonized* can mean a variety of things, whereas “possessed” really limits us to understanding that a demon(s) has gained full control of a human being, manifesting its purpose and personality through its host. With that understanding, we can speculate that just about anyone is capable of being demonized to one degree or another. Many theologians, however, will dogmatically state their view that it is impossible for a Christian to “have a demon” or to be “possessed.”

I have no argument with the idea that it is impossible for a true Christian to be fully “possessed,” but my own personal view is that Christians can indeed be subject to some demonic influences and effects in their lives depending on their degree (or rather their lack of) commitment to Christ, the amount and type of sin in their lives, and so on.

“How does one become possessed?”

Demonization and possession occur primarily through sin (including anger and unforgiveness) and/or occult involvement. Just how much sin and involvement in the occult are necessary to cause demonic influence to intrude into one’s life is impossible to say. One person can use a spirit board for years with no apparent effects, for instance, while someone else can use it once and end up with a demon. Perhaps the best point that can be made is that Christians need to avoid sin and the occult in any way they can to minimize the devil’s influence over their lives. Note also that some demons are more a force than a creature, and these are the sort more easily able to influence or possess a person.

The Unholy Trinity

To see some of the mechanics involved, one must start with understanding Satan's counterfeit of the Holy Trinity. This consists of himself as "God," with the Antichrist as "Son," and the Mankind's fallen nature as the "Unholy spirit."

Unlike the *Holy Spirit*, who indwells all believers, impelling and conforming them into the image of Christ, Satan is not omnipresent. He cannot simultaneously indwell humanity--except through the effects of mankind's fallen nature, which bears his own imprint and impels and conforms men into *his* corrupt image. And just as the Christian is sensitive to the influence of the Spirit leading Christians into righteousness, so the fallen nature of Mankind is sensitive to the influence of demonic forces leading to *unrighteousness*. This is as close as the devil can come to replicating the Holy Spirit and His work, and Paul alludes to it in Ephesians 2:2 and 2 Timothy 2:26:

...Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. ...And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Mankind bears an imprint of Satan's nature, and through this fallen nature has a natural bent toward manifesting Satan's traits (**adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like**) through the spirit at work in the lives of the unredeemed. But since Satan is not omnipresent, he works through his demonic intermediaries to simulate indwelling humanity. His demons, tempered only by God's grace and the light of conscience God gives every man, work to manifest their satanic influence and outlook upon both the unregenerate *and* the redeemed. The difference is, Satan is limited in the degree he can influence the redeemed, and must rely on the Christian's submitting his will to him against what the Holy Spirit prompts him to do in the face of the devil's thoughts and temptations. Satan's goal through this is to pervert the Christian's outlook and behavior away from God's to his own. *****

******* Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. (1st Peter 2:11)**

This influence over the unsaved person is sometimes such that demons gain actual possession of him, manifesting their own personality and will through the victim, and requiring exorcism to be expelled.

At this point, I feel it would be good to briefly warn Christians of something: Many Christians--including some otherwise sincere pastors and evangelists--have fallen into spiritual deception through trying to "make up" hearing the voice of God after praying. Never try to "hear" God's voice, or work yourself up into being "touched" by God (which includes faking being slain in the spirit). If you do, you might get "touched" all right--but it won't be *He touched me*; it will be something else that touches you, and you'll begin to hear a false voice that will lead you into deception. This is one of the reasons that some ministers come out with false prophecies and visions--they've arrived at a point of spiritual deception through their zeal in trying to hear the voice of God, and have unknowingly picked up a familiar spirit in the process; or else they have started prophesying out of their own imaginations.

"Does that mean there's spiritual deception in the Church and on TV?"

You bet it does. This is the main reason that Christians are never to presume that the presence of miracles or "Spiritual gifts" in someone's ministry legitimizes their theology or is an indication of their right standing with God. In biblical times, both Balaam and Caiaphas, who turned Jesus over to the Romans, spoke true prophecies from God. Does that mean they were righteous men whose

theology God approved of? Hardly! They spoke these words because of offices they held that God honored, and not because they, themselves, were true servants of God. So the fact that some evangelist can seemingly slay half the audience in the spirit is similarly no indication of his own right standing with God, of his being learned in the Scriptures, or of his theology being correct. So whenever a minister brings forth a new revelation on key spiritual issues that varies from what traditional Christianity teaches, we must carefully search the Bible to verify the accuracy of that teaching, or we, ourselves, can fall prey to spiritual deception. Paul, in 1st Timothy 4:1, warns that in the end times some Christians (repeat: not the sinners--but *Christians*) will fall prey to **“deceiving spirits and doctrines of devils,”** and clearly, the only way to guarantee we keep away from this sort of deception is to know the Scriptures and reject false teachings despite the fact that a minister stands up to say, “Thus saith the Lord,” and threatens disbelievers with judgment for questioning his word.

Bottom line: There is no such a thing as God’s mouthpiece to the Body of Christ, speaking infallible doctrine. Any minister who claims that questioning his theology when he’s “under the anointing” is questioning God, is speaking under the spirit of Satan.

“So how can I know who’s right, and who’s deceived when the evangelist says, ‘Thus saith the Lord’?”

Your best defense is learning the Scriptures, and learning them from some qualified teachers. Beyond that, another important factor is to make careful note of the man’s salvation doctrine. How close does he come to the purity of understanding salvation’s being gained and kept through faith alone? A vast number of false prophets tie getting to heaven not indirectly, but directly to holiness, sanctification, submission to church authority, and obeying commandments. You can also observe, as a general rule, the more legalistic and rules-oriented these ministers and their churches are, the greater seems to be their ability to speak in Tongues, and get up and “prophecy” that everyone’s going to hell who isn’t living a life of strict holiness!

The line between biblical holiness and demon-inspired legalism is a razor fine one. Ultimately, it comes down to why a man lives a holy lifestyle. If it’s done to honor God and to develop relationship, that’s the basis of true Christian holiness. If, however, it’s consciously done in order to gain or keep salvation, the man has fallen into legalism. This is why you can have two men living and preaching exactly the same lifestyle, but one man is going to heaven because he is trusting that the blood of Christ covers his sins, while the other is on his way to hell because he still believes God judges us by our works, so he lives by a host of rules to guarantee his lifestyle is righteous enough to avoid being lost when God reviews him at the Last Judgment. He will ultimately *be* lost because he is relying on that lifestyle to guarantee his salvation, and what he thinks are prophetic utterances from God ultimately come out of his own flesh, or else from a familiar spirit that has attached himself to the man through his spiritual deception.

This is why some of you in the past may have been deceived by false prophecy. You may have thought that some “word” that said you would be healed, see a loved one get saved, marry someone you had a crush on, or reap a 100-fold return on the money you sent to a minister *had* to have been from God. When it didn’t come true, you either got mad at God, or else got discouraged and blamed yourself for not having enough faith. Well, the truth is, the Charismatic movement is rife with false prophets who give the real ones a bad name. You can know them by their fruits: Listen to what they say about holiness and salvation! If they seem to endorse legalism in the guise of sanctification--beware! I especially encourage any pastors who may read this to require any guest speakers to their congregations open their sermons with a clear, concise explanation on how they believe salvation is both gained and kept.

Appendix III-- The *real* Sabbath truth

One of the most divisive issues in Christianity is that of Sabbatarianism. Now while worshipping/resting on the Sabbath day is no sin, and while the motivation of many who practice this may be commendable, many err in upholding Sabbatarianism as a *requirement* of Christianity, which invariably leads to denouncing non-Sabbatarians as pagans, false Christians, and so on.

While Messianics will tout Sabbatarianism by upholding the full Law of Moses, a non-Messianic Gentile Sabbatarian will typically appeal to the “**Ministration of death**,” better known as the 10 Commandments, declare *them* as a covenant of Law that must still be observed as written, and then hold that anyone who does not keep the Sabbath has rejected God’s commandments and thus chosen damnation over eternal life.

The truth, of course, is that Christianity *has not* fallen prey to heresy and paganism on this issue, and that Christians *are not* required to keep the Jewish Sabbath!

To show that, we will see what both the Old and New Testaments teach on the subject of what the Sabbath represents, and just *whom* must keep it.

First, we must determine if God said that Sabbath observance was mandated for everyone, throughout all time, or whether it was for a particular group, under a particular covenant, in one particular epoch of time.

The Sabbatarian will go to Genesis 2:3 for his doctrine, and declare that God established a commandment to keep the Sabbath right then and there, from the Garden of Eden.

But the text does not say that at all, and not one verse of Scripture explicitly *states* that God, at that point, commanded Sabbath observance and mandated rest consistent with what the Law later outlined. The only “commandment” (if one must use that word) Scripture actually says God gave Adam and Eve was not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, something a Sabbatarian will actually admit if you catch him off guard before he has a chance to realize he’s about to trap himself, and thus must throw in a second commandment. Yet Scripture shows God gave but *one* commandment and did not add to it, “And be sure to keep the Sabbath, not doing this, and not doing that!”

Meanwhile, chapter 4 of the Epistle to the Hebrews reveals the entire *point* of the Sabbath and the 7th day was to prefigure the ultimate rest that would come in Christ, a rest that comes through *believing*, and not by simply refraining from activities one day per week:

For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

--Heb. 4:3-4.

So far as the Bible is concerned, the first actual verse where God *did* explicitly command Sabbath-keeping, is actually found, thousands of years after Adam and Eve, in Exodus 16:23...

And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

...And Exodus 31:14-17.

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

Later, the commandment was repeated in Deut. 5:15, where it was again shown to have been given only to the *Jews*:

And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.

Later on, Nehemiah affirms that the Sabbath--as a mandatory rest day--was revealed through *Moses*:

Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:

--Nehemiah 9:13-14.

God also spoke to Ezekiel and indicated the Sabbath was given to and for the Jews in Moses' time:

Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness.

And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.

Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

--Ez. 20:10-12.

So the question is answered right there. God did not say, "I've always commanded the Sabbath be kept." He clearly indicated that He instituted Sabbath observance and a *mandatory* rest because He delivered the *Hebrews* from slavery in Egypt, and only *they* were called upon to keep it, something even the Jews--who *believe* in perpetual Sabbatarianism--affirm!

Meanwhile...

Neither my ancestors, nor I, were servants in the land of Egypt.

Neither my ancestors, nor I, were delivered through the Red Sea and baptized into Moses.

Neither my ancestors, nor I, agreed to or were bound to keep the Law of Moses.

Neither my ancestors, nor I, agreed to or were bound keep the covenant from Sinai.

Thus, as a New covenant Christian, I am not bound to keep the Jewish Sabbath.

"But Egypt represents the world, and Jesus delivered us from the world, so we must still keep the Sabbath!"

This lie is commonplace with Sabbatarians. Yet you will not find one verse in Scripture that says, “Egypt represents the world.” If you *had* to name a nation that represents “the world,” Rome--not Egypt--is the direction you should go.

In fact, if you will go to Rev. 11:8, you will see the Bible considers Egypt to represent not the world--but the holy city of *Jerusalem*!

And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

“Just where did God say He removed the sanctification for the seventh day then?!” the Sabbatarian will demand to know.

The answer is, He didn’t remove anything; He manifested the fullness of what the seventh day only symbolized in the person and ministry of Jesus--just as, in Christ, He manifested the fullness of what the Old Testament sacrificial system foretold. *Christ* is now our Sabbath rest--and now that we have full knowledge of that, we are no longer bound to keep the old prophetic types and shadows of that rest by cessation from all work on Saturdays, and stoning or cutting off from the Community those who fail to uphold the extremely high standard of rest God required for the day!

Not everyone in the days of the apostles could grasp that. There would always be some Romans 14 babes, “**weak in the faith**,” who would continue to observe the rituals and Sabbaths of the Law as commandments, rather than a non-mandatory tribute to culture and tradition.

Those brethren, in that time, were not to be condemned by those “**strong**” in the faith (Romans 14:3, 5), who had full knowledge of the New covenant--but neither were the “**weak**” to criticize *them*! But today is not then. Today we have had almost 2000 years for Christianity to walk in the Gospel through a fully developed canon of Scripture. Today there is no excuse for someone claiming to be a Christian to call fellow Christians into mandatory Sabbatarianism or adherence to the Jewish Law, denouncing those who do not follow as pagans.

It is the Sabbatarian of today who condemns himself out of his own mouth by attempting to impose the requirements of the Law on those who have responded to God in faith like Abraham--a man who never heard of or kept the Sabbath commands.

You will not find one verse in the New Testament that speaks approvingly of indoctrinating Gentile converts to the faith into Sabbatarianism. Quite the contrary. And to miss that fact, and go on to teach the Law and its Sabbath, is to substitute justification by faith for justification through obeying commandments, be they 613 or only 10.

It is unavoidable, despite the false teacher’s attempts to claim otherwise.

Again--look to Abraham, and compare the teaching of today’s Judaiser, be he an Adventist, Messianic, or Armstrongite, with what Scripture shows us Abraham did: You will not find Abraham keeping the Sabbath!

“But Isaiah said Gentiles will keep the Sabbath, and Jesus said ‘**the Sabbath was made for man**,’ so it’s not just for the Jews--it’s for Gentiles too, and we *all* must keep it!” the Sabbatarian will claim.

Well, then you can certainly turn to the Old Testament, and show me God’s denouncing the Gentile nations for *not* keeping it, right?

“Uhh...well, it must be somewhere in there.”

It's not. You can search Genesis to Malachai, and you won't find one instance where God ever criticized anyone other than the *Jews* for not keeping a Sabbath the heretic claims was mandated for humanity from the Garden of Eden!

That's because only the Jews were given the Law and the Sabbath commands that go with it.

Now if a Gentile joined himself to the commonwealth of Israel and accepted the *covenant of the Law*, then yes--he had to keep the Sabbath as Isaiah 56:6-7 shows. Then those same Gentiles could come and make animal sacrifices at the Temple--something utterly repugnant and anathema to New Testament Christianity and the New covenant we are all under now!

Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

--Isaiah 56:6-7.

A Sabbatarian often relies on half-truths, like quoting only verse 6 while avoiding verse 7, to promote his doctrine. Either from an intent to deceive the lazy or unlearned, or because he simply can't perceive and think out the full implications of the verses he relies on, the fact still remains: Mandatory Sabbatarianism is a staple of the Old covenant, and is inextricably entwined with Judaism, the Temple and its animal sacrifices, and the Jewish theocracy--institutions humanity has now moved past because of the cross of Christ.

"But Isaiah said about the Millennium, **And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD!** So right there, God says in the Millennial reign of Christ people will keep the Sabbath!"

This is yet another common error many people fall into: Failing to recognize promises under the Old covenant that were superceded by better promises in the New after the Jews crucified their Messiah. That passage, in Isaiah 66, represents the glory that *would* have come under the *Old* covenant if the Jews had accepted Christ. We can know that by going back to chapter 56, the Sabbatarian quotes, and reading forward to note that all the promises being spoken of center around a Levitical Temple with Levitical priests functioning under the Torah and making accepted animal sacrifices on the altar *to cover sin*! Also, note that the passage also implies keeping New Moon Sabbaths, which the Sabbatarian usually admits are Torah Sabbaths we need not keep in the New covenant!

But that sort of system, as the book of Hebrews notes, has been superceded by Christ and His atonement on the cross! *There will be no Temple with animal sacrifices and Levitical priests when Christ rules on the earth; there will be a Melchizidekal priesthood made up of Christ and all believers:*

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.
--Rev. 21:22.

"Well, that's in eternity--before that, Christ will rule a thousand years as the Prince/High Priest over a Millennial Temple conducting animal sacrifice to cover ritual uncleanness, possibly atone for sin, or perhaps as just some sort of remembrance--just the way we take Communion as a remembrance today even though we are saved by His blood!"

Wrong on all counts.

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

--Heb. 7:11-16.

Christ cannot be a High Priest over any sort of *Levitical* Temple because He is not a Levite--and it makes no difference that He is the Messiah! The Bible (Heb. 7 and 8:4) says He can't! His priesthood is Melchizidekal, not Levitical. He also cannot preside over a Torah-based Temple because Melchizidek did not function under the 10 Commandments, Sabbath, or Torah any more than Abraham did, nor did Melchizidek preside over a *physical* temple. God makes it clear (2 Sam. 7:6) that *Solomon's* Temple was the first physical temple ever erected to Him!

If this prophecy in Isaiah comes true in the future as the Sabbatarian and some people believe, the Book of Hebrews is false, and we must reject the Christian faith to hold onto the Mosaic Law and Temple system the Sabbatarian usually claims was transitory and fulfilled at the cross! We must also keep the kosher eating laws since verse 17 of chapter 66 says that those who eat pork will be consumed with the rest of the transgressors.

Is rejecting pork in the 10 Commandments, or is it in what the Sabbatarian often holds as the "civil and ceremonial Law written on parchment, and fulfilled at the cross"?

These are the kinds of issues Sabbatharians and cultists do not deal with in order to use half-truths to promote their false doctrines. That's why Paul said about them:

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

--1 Tim. 1:5-7.

So no, the prophecy in Isaiah does not require a Saturday Sabbath to be fulfilled in any way, shape, or form. The entire Millennium will be a Sabbath of sorts and people will be resting every day in Christ, and in the manifested fullness of everything the Sabbath prophesied, which is why the notion that in the Millennium we will also observe Jewish Feasts (most of which require animal sacrifice) as some sort of "remembrance" is likewise refuted. (And note that Hebrews 7 through 13 showed no respect or endorsement whatever for these Feasts continuing to be observed in the writers' time as any sort of "remembrance"--but rather, there was an encouragement to leave them, that system, and the camp behind just as Christ did!)

"Then just who is the Prince of the Millennial Temple if it isn't Jesus?!"

The better question is, "Who was *planned* to be the Prince of a Millennial Temple prophesied under the Old covenant that was never enacted because the people never repented and never ultimately accepted the Messiah?" Some have theorized Zerubbabel (Hag. 2:34). It certainly wasn't *Jesus* because its Prince was required to make an *animal sacrifice*--not take the blood of Christ--to cover

the sins of himself and the people (Ez. 45:22)! Thus, this Temple cannot exist during the reign of Christ or it would deny and supercede *Christ's* blood atonement! This Prince was also prophesied to apparently be married and produce offspring, again excluding Christ (Ez. 46:16)!

What some people mistakenly believe is a prophecy about a "Millennial Temple" with Jesus as its Prince that will conduct animal sacrifice, keep Jewish Feasts, and have Gentile nations come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles was actually the ultimate prophecy about the Millennial Kingdom that *would* have come to pass if the Jews had repented and accepted the Messiah. Yet as we see from Malachi 3:7, the Jews *never* kept God's Law, never fully or consistently repented, and the ultimate fruit of that was their leaders' formal rejection of Christ. The result was, with the Jews' rejection of Christ and the Old covenant, that covenant and its promises passed into history with the institution of the New covenant with its "**better promises**" (Heb. 8:6). Yes, there will still be a "Prince over a Millennial Temple," but that Prince will be Jesus, and His Temple will not be some building conducting animal sacrifice under a Levitical priesthood, but it will be the temple of His own body, and the sacrifice will be His own blood offered under His Melchizidekal priesthood!

"But *Jesus* kept the Sabbath, so if *He* kept it, so must we!" the Sabbatarian will say next.

Jesus came as a Jew "**under the Law**" to fulfill it perfectly, which certainly involved *His* keeping the Sabbath, and keeping it perfectly:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, Till all be fulfilled.

--Matt. 5:17-18.

All the Law, down to its "**jots and tittles**," was fulfilled on the cross, and the resurrection was God's proclamation of that to mankind!

"Well, that only means Jesus fulfilled the *civil and sacrificial* commandments; we must still keep the Ten Commandments' command to keep the Sabbath, because *God* wrote those, and the rest came from Moses, not God," says the Sabbatarian.

Really?

Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

--Deut. 8:11.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:

And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:

That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.

--Num. 15:37-40.

Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

--Mal. 4:4.

A common Sabbatarian myth is that God only gave the 10 Commandments (Deut. 4:13), ended His commandments with that, and the rest were given *only* by Moses. These others, the Sabbatarian will say, were not engraved on stone, showing they were only transitory and would pass away, while the 10 Commandments would be eternally in place, because God gave only those 10, and no more. Seventh Day Adventists will even claim their so-called prophetess, Ellen White, had a vision of heaven and the tablets of the 10 Commandments--and the Sabbath commandment was glowing brighter than all the rest! Jesus Christ Himself then told her that the Sabbath commandment was *not* nailed to the cross, and so must still be kept! Compare the deception of Ellen White to the words of *Christ*:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

--Matt: 22:36-38.

According to White's false vision, it is not the "**first and greatest commandment**" to worship God alone that stands out, but a less-important command to keep one day in seven holy! So far as the false teaching that the rest of the Law outside of the 10 Commandments isn't really as binding as the 10 because it came from Moses, the truth, in opposition to the lie, is that God affirms that the *whole* Law--even the few parts written by Moses--was *His* Law, and He wanted *all* of it, not around 2% of it, kept! Moses delivered it, and it was "Moses'" Law in that sense, but God--and Moses--makes it clear that Moses' Law is God's Law. Yet Sabbatarians will typically claim that everything beyond the 10 main commandments was only "civil and ceremonial laws that Jesus (supposedly) fulfilled at the cross."

"It wasn't kept inside the Ark of the Covenant either," they'll add, "so that too shows those laws not on stone were also transitory. God could have used stone, rather than paper or parchment, to write those *extra* laws on, but because of the permanent nature of the Ten, He wrote those in stone because *they* will never pass away or be fulfilled!"

Actually the scroll of the Law--which contained the 10 Commandments--was either inside the Ark or placed with it. But aside from that, let's take a look at some of these supposed "transitory civil and ceremonial laws" that we supposedly no longer need to keep because they were written on paper or parchment, rather than stone:

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

--Deut. 6:5.

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

--Lev. 19:18.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

--Matt. 22:37-40.

Note that what Jesus calls the two most important of all the commandments aren't even in the 10 Commandments, but are in this mythical "civil and ceremonial law Jesus fulfilled on the cross"!

Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

--Ex. 22:22.

Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

--Ex. 23:16.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness.

--Lev. 18:17.

Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.

--Lev. 18:22.

"Well," groans the Sabbatarian, "some of those moral commandments like that...while they're not really in the *Ten* Commandments, sort of, uh, fall under certain commandments *in* the Ten Commandments, so yes, they, uh, must still be kept...even though technically only the Ten Commandments still apply to us."

Here is where the Sabbatarian's theology collapses. He tries to make the 10 permanent, and relegate the rest to "civil and ceremonial law fulfilled at the cross," but key commandments he knows cannot possibly be ignored--including what Jesus called *the two most important of all commandments*--are right in the set of laws he claims are transitory, and God had no part in writing!

It is a myth that the 10 Commandments exist independent from the rest of the Law. People who foolishly tout the 10 Commandments have never understood what the Law really was. The 10 were capstones to the *entire 613*, and *all* those supposed "civil and ceremonial laws" fell under various commands in the 10, and were every bit as binding on the people under the Law as "**Thou shalt not kill**" was!

To sever the 10 from the other 603 is to cut the head off a man, and suppose he will still be perfectly fine.

This is why Paul, while affirming them to be "**holy, just and good**," still declares the 10 Commandments--and the Law that went with them--to be:

That which causes sin to have dominion over us (Rom. 6:14).

That which we are not under (Rom. 6:14).

That which we are dead to (Rom. 7:4).

That from which we are delivered (Rom. 7:6).

That which wrought in Paul all manner of concupiscence (Rom. 7:8).

That which revived sin in Paul (Rom. 7:9).

That which wound up working death in Paul (Rom. 7:13).

The strength of sin (1 Cor. 15:56).

The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones (2 Cor. 3:7).

The ministration of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9).

That which is done away (2 Cor. 3:11).

That which is “abolished.” (2 Cor. 3:13).

Now at this point, everyone from the modern-day Pharisee, to the typical Christian who does not understand the Gospel of Grace, will reply with the following statement:

“So you think it’s okay to steal, kill, and commit adultery?!”

Paul answers that question in Romans 6:15, and this topic is covered more in the next two sections: *Abraham--our paradigm for justification--who never kept the Sabbath or Law, and Where no Law is, there is no transgression.*

For now, this article will focus on the Sabbath issue.

Galatians and the Sabbath.

Paul’s first written work was the epistle to the Galatians, in which he had to write and rebuke the new believers for incorporating Jewish Law and circumcision into their walk with Christ. The issue arose because conservative Jewish Christians had come to central Turkey after Paul, instructing the Gentile believers that they must convert to Judaism to be saved, starting with the act of circumcision. As Torah-observant Jews, they naturally also indoctrinated the converts into the most critical observance in Judaism, the Sabbath.

After taking three chapters to remind the Galatians of the first Gospel of Grace they had received, and then denouncing the mixing of Jewish Law *with* that Gospel, Paul turned to the issue of Sabbatarianism in chapter 4.

But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

--Gal. 4:9-11.

There were exactly *four* Sabbath types in ancient Judaism, and Paul listed and condemned the mandatory observance of *all four sorts* in these verses:

1. Weekly Sabbath.
2. New moon (*Rosh Kodesh*).
3. Times (the *Moedim*, or “appointed times”--biblical holy days in the Law: Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles).
4. Sabbath years (there was one in AD 48 or 49 when this was written).

Now some false teachers, stung by these verses, will try to explain their way around them by playing games with the Greek when it speaks of the “**times**,” and will assert:

“Paul is actually speaking about pagan Astrological observances because the Greek word *kairos* there refers to that! Moreover, *paratereo*--translated ‘**observe**’--means visually *looking* at these phenomena!”

It’s true that one of the things *kairos* can refer to is indeed pagan Astrological observances. But what the Sabbatarian won’t tell you, either because of his ignorance or dishonesty, is that *kairos* is also the equal of the Hebrew word *moed*, and in the Greek Septuagint is used to refer to the “appointed times” of the Jewish Festivals in places like Lev. 23:4 and Num. 9:3!

That's what Paul is referring to here. *Paratereo*, meanwhile, can mean scrupulously watching to keep required religious observances, which obviously fits the context. (Strong's Greek Dictionary.)

So again, let's look at the four observances Paul criticized: All four of them are identical to the Torah Sabbaths! Even the Sabbath *year* is listed, and I know of no *pagan* observance in that society that corresponds to something that goes on for a full year! So far as I am aware, only the Jewish *Sabbath year* was a year-long observance that the people in that part of the world might be exposed to. Since there was indeed a Sabbath year when many believe this epistle was written, the issue that may have arisen is that the converts ceased working that year, and looked to the church to somehow support them. When we recall that Paul's issue was Jewish legalists mixing Law with Grace to start with, there is no question whatever these same legalists would have taught all forms of the Sabbath--and coincidentally, all those forms are listed in Gal. 4! Then let us recall what the theme of Galatians is.

Was Paul writing because the Galatians had rejected Christ, and had returned to worshipping pagan idols?

Not at all! There is no disagreement--even among Sabbatarians--that the chief reason Paul wrote Galatians was to refute the doctrine of legalistic Jewish teachers. From the first sentences, Paul goes on to denounce mixing Judaism with the Gospel, dealing first with how he had been an exemplary Jew, yet was dead in sin before Christ was revealed to him. Then he tackles the subject of circumcision, and moves on from there.

By the time he gets to chapter 4, he is ready to tackle Sabbatarianism, because the theme of Galatians is absolutely a rebuke of the people keeping the *Jewish* Law, not *pagan* laws!

The Sabbatarian now knows he has a problem with chapter 4, so he will state that Paul has branched off to talk about *pagan* practices. But we can overwhelmingly refute the Sabbatarian's claim by looking at verses 10 and 11, then moving past verses 12-20--where Paul diverts from the subject to remind the Galatians of how well they once got along--and then going to verse 21 where he picks up his theme again. And what does he say?

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

Paul has not been talking about *pagan* practices, but the Sabbaths in the Law from Sinai!

If it would help, let's write that out, putting aside the extraneous verses that divert to talk about the relationship Paul and the Galatians once had, and focus only on the connected theme of the indictment he is making in verses 9 to 11, and 21 to 30:

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.
14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.
15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.
16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?
17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.
18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.
19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,
20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?
22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.
23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.
24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.
25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.
26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.
27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.
28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.
29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.
30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son:* for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

* Words 100% applicable to many Sabbatarians!

“No! No!” the Sabbatarian will insist. “The Galatians couldn’t ‘turn back’ to Sabbath observance since they had been pagans before Paul! So it *must* be talking about pagan observances! You can see that in verse 9 where it talks about “**elements**,” using the Greek word *stoicheion*, which refers to following pagan gods in Astrological and idolatrous worship!”

What these people miss, in their deception, is the true context of the passage. We do *not* assert that Paul was claiming these Gentiles had ever kept the Sabbath. We claim his point was actually based on verse 8:

Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

Meaning, as good pagans, *back then*--but not now--they had performed *religious duties and obligations* like honoring certain days, making certain sacrifices, and doing certain things to appease creatures that by nature were not gods, but merely *masqueraded* as gods. Now, having been deceived by the Judaisers, they were rejecting the Gospel of Grace, and while not actually returning to worshipping idols through pagan rituals and Astrological observances, they were re-embracing the same sort of system of works-based appeasement of the God they had accepted by adopting Law, circumcision, and/or Sabbath observance. This is why Paul asked earlier, in chapter 3:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

It is thus not a return to literal pagan idolatry, but rather a *mindset* of paganism--reflected in turning to the 'Covenant of Works'--they were returning to through the influence of the Judaizers, and bringing that mindset into the faith, trying to placate God through the Law, something Paul shows even *he* was guilty of in verse 3 of chapter 4:

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

"**Elements**" (*stoicheion*), is the same word the Sabbatarian uses to claim that Paul was speaking of the Galatians participating in pagan Astrological rituals in verse 9, yet he uses the same word about himself in verse 3!

Is Paul saying he was once a pagan?

No!

Paul is saying that he was caught up in the same mindset of religious bondage, trying to placate God under the Law, just as the Galatians were once doing when they tried to placate Satanic forces through their own commandment-keeping, sacrifices, and religious ordinances. Thus, the argument that Paul was accusing the Galatians of returning to paganism--rather than turning to the Sabbaths and Judaism--is easily refuted by anyone who looks at the chapter and allows its clear context to define Paul's words.

"But the apostles were all Sabbath-keepers--even Paul!" the Sabbatarian next says.

Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

--Acts 21:24-25 (quoting James).

So we see that while the early *Jewish* apostles and disciples were Sabbath and Torah-observant, James says the Gentiles were to do, "**no such thing,**" and reiterates the ruling of Acts 15, 10 years earlier, which only called upon the new converts to watch out for a few ungodly practices--rather than to keep some set of laws and commandments to make heaven!

"But the church kept the Sabbath until the Catholic popes banned it, and Constantine made Sunday worship a law!"

This is another common lie spread by Sabbatarians. First, let's look at the Scriptures:

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.**

--Acts 20:7.

Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.**

--1 Cor. 16:2.

** A few of the more dishonest Sabbatarians will pay a word game here, and incompetently claim the verses should be understood as *first of the Sabbath*, but the same wording is used in John 20:1 when Mary comes to the tomb, and not even the most deceived Sabbatarian denies it means the *first day of the week*, rather than the Sabbath day. And, of course, so far as 1 Cor. 16: 2 goes, no Jew would ever have taken up or assembled a collection on the Sabbath!

Starting with the Book of Acts, on into 1st Corinthians, we see clear Sunday worship by at least *some* of the early church.

Also, 1st (Didache), 2nd (Justin Martyr), 3rd (Didascalia), and 4th (Augustine) century Christian writings, *among many other sources*, all show Sunday worship in existence.

The 1st century Didache--written centuries before Constantine--is the earliest document outside the church acknowledging Sunday worship when it says, "*But every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread....*"

The next-earliest reference is from around 105 AD, and Ignatius of Antioch, second or third bishop of Antioch, who led the church while John was still alive in Ephesus, and wrote--before his martyrdom in 110 AD--about Christians who "*have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day.*"

You never hear Sabbatarians quote those ancient passages, and address *them*, do you?

You don't because their theology cannot stand on its own two feet when tested against the *full* scope of Christian writings and history, and they know that. So they will ignore history that refutes their claim, and instead pick and choose other writings out of history favorable to their doctrine. Many, for example, will attempt to deceive the sheep by using this quote from the 5th century:

For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrated the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, refuse to do this.

--Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5, Chap. 22.

Wow--sounds like Socrates of Constantinople, has made a great point for the Sabbatarians!

Maybe the Sabbatarians are right, and the church *was* Sabbatarian until some pope forced it to change, and we should go back *to* Sabbatarianism to follow God!

...Or could it be this quote is actually part of a contrived *lie* by the Sabbatarians to deceive the unlearned?

Let's see the *entire passage* where this quote comes from:

And among various nations there are other usages, for which innumerable reasons are assigned. Since, however, no one can produce a written command as an authority, it is evident that the apostles left each one to his own free will in the matter, to the end that each might perform what is good not by constraint or necessity. Such is the difference in the churches on the subject of fasts. Nor is there less variation in regard to religious assemblies. For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.

Notice how the Sabbatarians leave out the context of the passage to make their lie seem believable?! The same source they appeal to as "proof" the church must be Sabbatarian says it's up to the

individual to decide because there ‘is no written command as an authority’ regarding things like fasting and the day of worship!

Even worse, these same people seem to avoid *this* quote from Socrates:

The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.
--Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 7, Chap. 19.

And so true history--not the lying writings of 7th Day Adventists, Messianics, Armstrongites, and other heretics with a Sabbatarian agenda--shows that as far back as there are records of the Christian church, Christian churches worshipped on Saturday, Sunday, or Saturday *and* Sunday, and there was no issue against Sunday worship, nor was Sabbatarianism made a salvation issue or a mandatory observance for the early Christian church.

That’s the difference between truth and heresy: As Romans 14:5-6 shows, the day of worship is irrelevant, and one may choose either--and the history of the early church shows it did that for centuries, neither requiring Saturday *or* Sunday observance to be an equal member of the Community. Only as the church, in later centuries, sought to distance itself from Judaism, did it formalize a Sunday worship day, leaving a Saturday “Sabbath” behind--just as 2nd century Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had dropped a Saturday Sabbath to worship on Sunday to distance themselves from the non-Christian Jews. This, according to the History Channel®, is why they were allowed to remain in Jerusalem after its fall, while Jews were driven out of it into Diaspora. But the entire argument over Saturday or Sunday, or whether or how to rest, is moot: The New Testament is clear that Christians are not required to keep the Sabbath laws, and our paradigm for that is found in Abraham, who never heard of or kept the Sabbath, despite the Sabbatarian’s Scripturally-indefensible claim that he must have.

Meanwhile, I challenge any Sabbatarian to show me Christian writings from the 1st-3rd century from *any* Christian group mandating Sabbath observance as a requirement for Gentiles to be in the church--or specifically denouncing Sunday worship--and let’s see what these writings say vs. known history and the New Testament Scripture.

Or, let’s ignore all this and go right *to* the New Testament instructions to the church in the epistles.

I’ve shown the church in Acts and the Corinthian church meeting on Sunday. Now...

Can anyone show me one time where Paul commanded the Sabbath be kept by Gentiles?
Can anyone show me one time where John commanded the Sabbath be kept by Gentiles?
Can anyone show me one time where James commanded the Sabbath be kept by Gentiles?
Can anyone show me one time where Jude commanded the Sabbath be kept by Gentiles?
Can anyone show me one time where Peter commanded the Sabbath be kept by Gentiles?

You have all the epistles from Romans to Revelation to draw from.
I can show you repeated admonitions to righteousness, upright business dealings, abstaining from fornication, rejection of idolatry, love for one’s brother, doing good, obeying civil authority, paying taxes--and many things like that. But *nowhere* the word “**Sabbath**” even appears except here:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

--Col. 2:16-17.

In fact, you can't find *anyplace* in the New Testament where Gentiles are commanded to keep the Sabbath. What you can find in the *Old* is the necessity for Sabbath observance, and even *circumcision* for Gentiles under the covenant from Sinai--a covenant that keeps men in "**bondage**":

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

--Gal. 4:24-26.

"Well," says the Sabbatarian, "just because the Bible is silent on any *explicit* Sabbath-keeping before Moses, that doesn't mean people of God didn't keep it."

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

--2 Tim. 3:16.

We do not base our faith on Sabbatarian speculation and inability to back up his doctrines with *explicit* Scripture. We go *by* Scripture--and Scripture shows *no* explicit call to Sabbath observance before Moses, says through Nehemiah it was given *through* Moses, and where it *does* call for Sabbath observance, Scripture says it was because God delivered the Jews from Egypt!

"B-But *Jesus* said to pray that you don't have to flee on the Sabbath, so obviously *He* taught Sabbath observance!"

Those words were spoken to the Judeans of the 1st century in context of prophesying the fall of Jerusalem.*** Many of these same Jews were so fanatical about keeping the Sabbath that they denounced Jesus for *healing* on it! So for *them*, God forbid the armies of Titus arrive on the Sabbath because these same people would have stayed put and been slaughtered!

*** See "**them**" in verse 16. Also, the apostles present when Jesus spoke this were either dead or not in Judea when Jerusalem fell; and the Christian community departed Jerusalem before the actual siege began.

But let's say the Sabbatharians are right on this point. When they have tried telling me here that Jesus was commanding perpetual Sabbath observance or teaching that in the End Times His people would be keeping the Sabbath, I have asked them questions like this: "Say one Saturday morning a dam above your town was going to give way and wipe out everything, and local authorities called for an emergency evacuation of the city. Would you and your family stay in your house and die on the Sabbath, because you are forbidden to travel, or would you get in your car and head for the hills?"

Typically I then get a snide remark that I'm being either silly or legalistic, yet many of these same Sabbatharians would go to the very verse I'm basing my question on (Matt. 24:20) and use *that* verse to claim Jesus demanded Sabbath rest always be observed, even to the extent of not fleeing the murdering armies of Rome or the Antichrist! But if there is a Sabbatarian out there who would be sincere enough to take this verse as doctrinal instruction by Jesus and stay put in his easy chair as the water rose to his neck and above, rather than get in his car and flee, I haven't met him.

And that's called *hypocrisy*.

"But *if we love Him, we'll keep his commandments; and the saints have the testimony of Jesus, and keep the commandments of God!*" says the Sabbatarian.

Then pull out your *bris* knife, and circumcise yourself, I reply, because “God’s Commandments”--if you insist on using the word “**commandments**” in your Bible to always mean “God’s Law”--actually demand Spiritual *and* physical circumcision as I noted earlier!

Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

--Ez. 44:9.

So if we live under the Old Testament Law the Sabbatarian seems bound by, then yes--Gentiles must keep the Sabbath *and* get physically circumcised to go to the Temple to worship with the Jews.

But since we live under the *New* covenant, show me the word “Sabbath” in the letters to the church if we must still keep it!

Then show me New Testament instructions to the Gentiles in the churches just *how* to keep the Sabbath properly!

May the Gentiles cook? Gather water? Light a fire? Travel? Transact business? Carry a burden? Have sex? Some or all of these are *death penalty violations of the Sabbath* according to the Old Covenant some of you think is binding on the New:

Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: Everyone that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

--Ex. 31:14.

What do the New Testament epistles, then, teach to the poor, ignorant Gentiles, coming out of paganism, that they may do and *must not do* on the holy day of the Sabbath?

Those epistles teach them to love one another, avoid idolatry and sexual sin, avoid greed, avoid drunkenness, avoid disrespect to parents, and to do many other things, including something as mundane as being quiet in the church.

But I don’t know of one command of how these same Gentiles who need to be taught to avoid idolatry, sexual sin--and even murder--are supposed to keep a Sabbath God says you must be executed for if you defile it by so little as *gathering some sticks on it*!

When the Sabbatarian says the Bible--Old *and* New Testament--affirms the keeping of the Sabbath, ask him to cite the verses where the New Testament says that, and then instructs the new converts on just *how* to keep that Sabbath.

You will find the Sabbatarian cannot do that, and will simply set up straw men to knock down, use circular reasoning, appeal to Old Testament verses about the Law, make weak arguments from a handful of vague New Testament verses to refute *clear* verses on the subject, or make rhetorical arguments like, “Jesus kept the Sabbath--shouldn’t we be like *Him*?”

Well, the answer is, we should do what He and His apostles called on us to do, and the observance of the Sabbath is not among the things in the New Covenant of Grace we are *called* upon to do.

“That the New Testament is silent on commanding Sabbath observance is actually the strongest argument *for* it! That shows everyone already knew they had to keep it, so there was no reason to *tell* them to keep it!”

This foolishness speaks for itself. An argument from silence is the weakest possible, made in desperation when a person has nothing solid to fall back on. The Sabbatarian would have us believe no instruction on the Sabbath was necessary because “everyone knew what they were supposed to do, and so it was unnecessary.”

Yet these same people had to be warned against adultery?! Apparently they had the Sabbath down, but were ignorant on the subjects of adultery, idolatry, drunkenness, and so on.

Amazing.

“Shouldn’t we at least keep the *principle* of the Sabbath?”

If you see some principle that it is unhealthy for mankind to work seven days a week, and needs at least one day off, or you see the good in focusing on worship or family one day a week, by all means take advantage of that. But do not uphold those *principles* as commandments of God in the New covenant that place us in sin and condemnation if we do not observe them. The requirements for believers have been clearly stated in the New Testament (starting at Acts 15 where “**no greater burden than these necessary things**” is shown), and Sabbath observance is *not* one of them!

I would add that a noted 7th Day Adventist once asked: “Are you saying I’m going to hell for keeping the very commandment God said to *remember*?!”

The answer is, “You might well!”

Why?

For the same reason a Galatian who obeyed the “**everlasting covenant**” of circumcision in Genesis 17 would find that, “**Christ will profit you nothing**”: There are only two covenants for justification God ever established. One is of Law, and one is of Grace. If you mix the two, albeit sincerely and with good intent, Paul--not me--declares...

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

--Gal. 5:2-4, 9.

A *little* bit of legalism, or a *little* bit of error, can pollute the entire Gospel--not according to me, but according to Paul--and either we dismiss what he says, or we take him seriously on the issue!

“Well, I know *I’m* not in trouble on Judgment Day because I’m keeping the fourth commandment and the other nine!”

So did the Rich Young Ruler and the Pharisees. That didn’t save *them*. It won’t save you.

The truth is, no Sabbatarian really “keeps” the 10 Commandments any more than any Jew “keeps” the Law! Both are equally deceived, and neither really “keep” the Law, but rather try--and fail--to keep the Law they think applies to them. The Sabbatarian simply thinks he’s better off than the Jew because Christ forgives *his* failings to perfectly keep the Law, while the Jew remains condemned, yet the person secure because he “keeps” all 10 Commandments is really no different from a

Pharisee certain *he's* going to be fine on Judgment Day because he keeps the *whole* Law, including the Sabbath!

The Sabbath didn't do the Pharisees one whit of good because the Sabbath can't save anyone, and a conscious or unconscious belief that it guarantees security in eternity puts a Christian in precisely the same boat as a Pharisee who believes his Torah observance will guarantee *his* place with God!

While it is no sin to worship on Saturday, or to "rest" on Saturday, *neither is there any righteousness in it*. Sin enters when placing one's trust in his Sabbath observance as a sign of being a "real" Christian that will secure his salvation. To cross the line and *require* Sabbath observance as a command that places salvation at stake if it is ignored, or to tout it as some sort of "test" to see if one is *really* a worshipper of God, is to leaven the Gospel of Grace exactly as the Judaisers did with circumcision, a commandment God called an "**everlasting covenant**," and was so important that He even tried to kill Moses when *he* refused to circumcise his son!

Note that--an "**everlasting covenant**."

Shouldn't that settle the issue? Shouldn't language like that show this is a commandment that can *never* be ignored? That absolutely *must* be kept? That to ignore it would have to place salvation at risk? That a commandment so important to God (Ex. 4:24) that He literally "**sought to kill**" Moses for not obeying it must absolutely be kept throughout every generation?

But Paul, the council of Acts 15, and the writings of the New Testament show this "**everlasting covenant**" from God has no place in the New covenant method for justification and right-standing with the same God who gave it in a different era and dispensation.

Many sincere, yet deceived, Sabbatarians believe the Sabbath is the "test commandment" to see if they will obey God, and having adopted that commandment--while, hypocritically, keeping it nowhere near as strictly as the Scripture calls for--believe they have passed the test, and are thus secure in their salvation. Yet many of those same people are as damned as the Judaisers who kept that same Sabbath commandment, for ultimately there is no difference between a hell-bound Jew placing his security with God in his circumcision and Torah observance, and a hell-bound Gentile placing *his* in the Sabbath and 10 Commandments.

It is exactly the same false Gospel! The only difference is that the Judaiser accepted 100% of the Law, while today's Sabbatarian typically accepts only 2% of it, yet thinks *he's* the one being obedient!

Oh--and in case you wonder, I go to church on Saturdays.

Appendix IV-- Abraham--our paradigm for justification--who never kept the Sabbath or Law

It is vitally important that every Christian study the life of Abraham, because one of Paul's greatest revelations was that he was the archetypal paradigm for mankind's justification with God.

In contrast to everything Judaism believed, Paul came to understand that righteousness--and from that full justification--could only come by God's grace, through faith, apart from any of mankind's human efforts.

For Paul, Abraham was the proof of this.

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all...

--Rom. 4:16.

Not only was Abraham, the Patriarch of the Jews, declared righteous by God specifically because of his belief apart from keeping a list of commandments (Gen. 15:6), but that declaration of his righteousness and right standing with God came centuries before the Law had been given through Moses.

While there were many great men who served God after the Law was given--and while many, from a human standpoint, were righteous--only Abraham had the distinction of being declared righteous independent of keeping a Law, and actually had God impute a *foreign* righteousness to him, based on his faith.

Paul, who had fastidiously kept the commandments of the Law, yet was dead in sin and committing murder in the name of a God he did not really know, realized that the greatest men *under* the Law were still convicted by their shortcomings, and even if called "righteous," in a general sense, still stood condemned, and still lived their lives out in constant failure to truly reach a state of absolute righteousness before God by keeping His legion of commandments.

In coming to this revelation, Paul had to come to grips that the Torah given through Moses--which had been pounded into the heads of the Jews for 1500 years--not only couldn't save or justify men before God, but actually *hindered* mankind's justification before God by imposing a standard of obedience that humankind could not achieve due to its fallen nature, which was actually *empowered* by the Law to rebel!

Some of his final conclusions about the Law were that:

It causes sin to have dominion over us (Rom. 6:14).

It wrought in Paul all manner of concupiscence (Rom. 7:8).

It revived sin in Paul (Rom. 7:10).

It wound up working death in Paul (Rom. 7:13).

It is strength of sin (1 Cor. 15:56).

Why then, if the Law seemed to cause so many problems, was it even given if no law is required to be reckoned just before God?

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.
--Gal. 3:19.

And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.
--Deut. 32: 20.

Paul saw that the Law had been given because the Jews of Moses' time were not of the same spirit as their ancestor Abraham. They were faithless rebels, constantly needing a guide to keep them in line. Without such a guide, they were wanton sinners and eager idolaters because of their critical lack of faith, and so God (arguably) gave them laws that were "**not good**" to keep them in line (Ez. 20:25).

And even *with* the Law, their core nature never really changed, and throughout all generations of Israel the nation refused to even *live* by that Law:

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them.
--Malachi 3:7.

Paul quickly saw in the history of Israel an utter failure for the nation to be in right standing with God in the way its Patriarch Abraham--about whom God had no complaint--was.

What was the difference?

The one man obtained that right standing through faith, while the nation sought it through obedience, yet failed to achieve it because they thought it would come by keeping commandments:

**For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.
For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.**
--Rom. 10: 3-4.

And so, in Romans and Galatians, Paul directs his readers to Abraham as the archetypal paradigm of justification with God.

In both cases, he goes out of his way to point out that Abraham *kept no Law*, and achieved full justification with God only through faith--and that by faith alone, *we* inherit the blessing of righteousness that Abraham had:

**We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,
Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**
--Gal. 2:15-16.

**He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.
And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.**

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.
For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.
And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.
--Gal. 3: 5-12.

And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.
For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.
--Gal. 3:17-18

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.
For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,
Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.
Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.
How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.
And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:
And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.
For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.
For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:
Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.
--Rom. 4:1-15.

While these verses--among many others of Paul's--should settle the issue, the truth is that many Christian movements simply cannot accept the Gospel Paul articulated. Many denominations--good and bad--teach that we must somehow keep some sort of Law to be pleasing to God, or as "proof" we have "real" faith.

Well...let us do as Paul directs, and look at Abraham.

First, let us ask: *Did Abraham know or keep the Law?*

No! It wasn't given until 430 years later, according to Gal. 3:17, a fact that is critically important to note!

Did Abraham keep the Sabbath?

No! There isn't one place in Scripture that says he did or that God told him to! And if Abraham did keep the Sabbath commands, then Paul would have noted that as playing a factor in his justification--or would have at least mentioned that *did not* play a factor, as he does when speaking of circumcision. Instead, Paul went out of his way to show that Abraham's justification existed entirely distinct from the Law, which would have to mean outside its Sabbath commands.

Did Abraham keep any set of "commandments"?

No!

"But wait!" the Jew and Messianic will say. "The Old Testament *says* Abraham kept the Law and God's commandments!"

Let's look at that claim. The passage in question these groups appeal to is this:

**Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father;
And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;
Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.**

--Genesis 26:3-5.

"Well, there you go--Abraham *was* keeping the Law, right?"

Actually, no. And to prove that, we will go to the Scriptures, test the claim against what the Bible actually shows, and see if that passage means what it *appears* to say, because if it does mean what many of you think it means, you have just made Paul a false teacher as I will go on to show.

But first, let's see how Christian commentators of the past viewed verse 5.

A great variety of words is here used to express the Divine Will to which Abraham was obedient: my voice, my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws, which may intimate, that Abraham's obedience was universal; he obeyed the original laws of nature, the revealed laws of divine worship, particularly that of circumcision, and all the extraordinary precepts God gave him, as that of quitting his country, and that (which some think is more especially referred to) the offering up of his son, which Isaac himself had reason enough to remember.
--John Wesley.

"My charge" he kept, observed, &c., the ordinances or appointments of God. These were always of two kinds:

1. Such as tended to promote moral improvement, the increase of piety, the improvement of the age, &c. 2. Such as were typical of the promised seed, and the salvation, which was to come by him. For commandments, statutes, &c., the reader is particularly desired to refer to Leviticus xvi. 15, &c., where these things are all explained in the alphabetical order of the Hebrew words.

--Adam Clarke.

...My commandments, my statutes, and my laws; *whether moral, ceremonial, or civil and judicial; all and everyone which God enjoined him, he was careful to observe. Here seems to be something wanting, for the words are not to be joined with the preceding, as if Abraham's obedience was the*

cause of the above promises made to Isaac, or to himself: but this is mentioned rather as an example to Isaac, and to stir him up to do the like, as if it was said, because or seeing that Abraham thy father did so and so, do thou likewise.

--John Gill.

Having looked at the opinions of theologians of the past, the bottom line is that no one can say precisely what *is* meant here. Some Ultra-Orthodox Jews even claim it means Abraham was keeping all 613 commandments *plus* the rabbinic clarifications to them!

But for *Christians*, we go not by Jewish speculation, but by what the apostle Paul actually *says* on this issue, which is that *no Law existed from Adam down to Moses!*

For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

--Rom. 5:14.

And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

--Gal. 3:17.

The Law starts with Moses, 430 years *after* Abraham!

"No! No!" the Adventist will now say. "The *Torah* may start with Moses, but certainly the Ten Commandments were established from the Garden of Eden, and Abraham was keeping *those*, especially the Sabbath command! *That's* what the passage in Genesis means!"

No. Were that true, then there would have been a Law given before Moses, mankind would have been accountable to that Law, and Paul could *not* have said:

For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

--Rom. 5:14.

"**No law**" means *no Law*--not, "No Law but for the 10 Commandments!"

Also, Moses himself indicates the 10 Commandments starts with the Jews of *his* era:

The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb (Mt. Sinai).

The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of here alive this day.

--Deut. 5:2-3. (See also Deut. 4:10-13.)

If Abraham *was* keeping the 10 Commandments Moses said was not given before the Exodus, then you have just refuted Paul's teachings in Romans 4:13-15, and denied Moses' words on top of that!

Now I know Messianics who *do* reject Paul and consider him to be a false teacher. But assuming you are a *real* Christian who follows the teachings of Paul as the Word of God--your choice is made for you: No Law existed between Adam to Moses, and if you teach that one did and that Abraham was keeping it, you are directly contradicting the teachings in Romans and Galatians.

Yet why do some Jews think Abraham *kept* the full Law?

Because of the language here that meant something in their culture:

Statutes--refers to oral explanations on how to keep the Law.

Commandments--are things you have to do, for which a reason may not clearly be given, like wearing *tefillin*.

Laws--"commandments" in the sense of laws (often moral) given *with* an explanation on why you have to do them.

Thus, many Jews (wrongly) conclude Abraham kept the full Torah.

But for we Christians, we go by what Paul said, and Paul said there was no *explicit* Law between Adam to Moses. And, *had* Abraham been keeping any sort of Law as a part of his justification with God--whether it's the 10, the 613, or only the Sabbath--we have this problem:

For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

--Gal. 3:18.

So what *was* meant here?

I believe, as Wesley indicates, that Abraham had an intrinsic grasp of God's morality, and went on to obey what God asked of him, which included obeying a circumcision covenant, making an animal sacrifice, and being willing to sacrifice his son. Beyond that, I suspect God was prophetically speaking about Christ *through* Abraham, who alone kept God's *commandments, statutes, and laws* to God's true standard, and so the verse, in its ultimate sense, did not even refer to Abraham, *per se*.

But let's say I'm wrong. Let's say Abraham *was* keeping some set of commandments. What were those commandments, because I'd like to keep them and go to heaven *with* Abraham?

"Well, they were the Ten Commandments," says the Adventist, "especially the Sabbath!"

"No," says the Messianic, "while he certainly kept the Sabbath, Abraham was also keeping the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvot*, which always existed, but was simply *written down* in Moses' time!"

"You're both wrong," says the Reform Jew. "He was keeping the seven Noachide commandments!"

"A pox on all of you!" says the ultra-Orthodox Jew. "The great Rashi shows that Avraham kept all the Torah of Moshe, and *also* the oral traditions of the rabbis that would follow him on *how* to keep it properly because he discerned all these mysteries by contemplating the nature of G-d's creation!"

Hmm. Whom should I believe? Maybe the Adventist is right. But if he is, which of the two written versions (Ex. 20:2-17 and Deut. 5:6-21) of the 10 Commandments is the correct one?

Which of the four (the Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant) ways of dividing up the 15 actual imperative statements of Exodus 20 into 10 commandments is really correct?

And then, what if the Adventist or 10 Commandments-touter is wrong, and Abraham really kept 613 commandments as the rabbis claim? Must *I* keep the full 613 as well? Am I lost if I keep the wrong set of commandments?

How can I figure out which of these varying opinions is the right one?

Well, let's not speculate--but simply go to the *Bible* and list every command God is recorded to have ever given Abraham, and see what those commands were!

Gen. 12

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:
2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Gen. 13

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

Gen. 15

1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.
6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.
10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.
11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away.
12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.
13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;
14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.
15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.
16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.
17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.
18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:
19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,
20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,
21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Gen. 17

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.
10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.
11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.
12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.
13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.
14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.
15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.
16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

Gen. 21

12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Gen. 22

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

That's it. Every "command" God ever gave Abraham.

Where is the mention of the Torah?

Where is the mention of the 10 Commandments?

Where is the mention of the Sabbath?

There is none! And if you think I'm leaving something out, go read all the chapters of Genesis dealing with Abraham, and you will find I'm not! There is no record of God's giving Abraham *any* "Law" to obey.

To say that God *did* give a set of commandments to Abraham, who then kept them and was somehow justified or by that secured God's approval, is to deny what the *Scripture* says about him, and requires us to:

1. Invent encounters with God that the Bible never mentions.
2. Make up orders given by God to Abraham that the Bible never mentions.
3. Presume Abraham then adopted a certain lifestyle, based on these unsubstantiated encounters and commands that the Bible never mentions.
4. Presume his obedience to this unlisted set of commandments placed Abraham in right standing with God, which the Bible not only never mentions, but contradicts in Romans 4.

So what you will find the *Bible* actually records are simply general orders, including to sacrifice his son, all of which Abraham obeyed.

Even James, the man the cultists go to in order to validate their heresies about justification through works, writes that Abraham was justified--not by keeping some Law and its commandments--but by offering up Isaac:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

--James 2:21.

The only possible issue that could be raised about obedience to a commandment playing a factor in God's approval of Abraham would be his submitting to circumcision, but Paul deals with that and makes it clear circumcision played *no* role in being justified with God whatever:

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

--Rom. 4:9-13.

Thus, Abraham was not *under* the Law, nor was he *keeping* the Law!

Now--does that mean because Abraham wasn't under the Law, that it was okay for him to sin?

No.

Did he go out and sin?

No. (Though he did technically break kosher eating rules in Gen. 18:8, and violated Lev. 18:9 by being married to his sister, while his grandson violated the Torah by marrying two sisters.)

But these technical "transgressions" were not imputed to either Abraham or Jacob because, as Paul says:

...Sin is not imputed when there is no law.

--Rom. 5:14.

The truth is that Abraham was a righteous man (in the sense of being a moral man), so God had no need to give him laws against unrighteousness. But the fact he was righteous, in a temporal sense, doesn't mean he "kept" commandments of a codified Law of some sort! He simply lived a good moral life as we too are called to do--*independent* of "keeping" laws and commandments!

Yet the Child of the Flesh can't get that. He claims that if we say we're not "under the Law," and if we don't "keep commandments," we're saying it's okay to sin.

All that does is show the ignorance of heretics who miss what the New covenant actually is.

So then--how did Abraham achieve justification with God if he wasn't "keeping God's Law"?

Through *faith*.

"Oh, but faith without works is dead, so we need to keep God's Law or we don't have real faith," says the Child of the Flesh.

When a Messianic, Cultist, or any false teacher says we must keep this Law or that, or do this or that to be in right standing with God or to prove we have "real" faith, we must immediately go back to Abraham, and check whether Abraham was doing, in practice, what *that* person says we must.

If we do that, we will see that everything the false teacher claims we're required to do was not done *as an act of conscious obedience to a Law* by Abraham.

All the man did to be justified with God was to believe--not believe and go *do* this or that!

And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

--Gal. 3:12.

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

--Rom. 4:5.

"No! No!" the cultist will insist. "Abraham kept various commandments in the Law, even though the Law hadn't been written down yet by Moses, and that's because God taught those commandments to him orally. So we must keep those commandments--like the Sabbath--just as Abraham did, even if the Bible doesn't *explicitly* say God taught them to him!"

Wrong.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

--2 Tim. 3:16.

Again, we do not base critical issues of the faith on someone's oral tradition or speculation--we go to the *Scripture*! When we do, we see that *in* that Scripture, Paul has directed us to Abraham as our paradigm for justification. And while it enrages some, Scripture shows the man Abraham never "kept God's holy Law" to be in full right standing with the God who imputed righteousness to him because of his *belief*, and not his obedience to a set of commandments!

"Well...God has given us more revelation through the writings of Moses and the prophets than Abraham had, so now we know clearly what His commandments are, and even if Abraham didn't know or keep them, *we* certainly must, or we are rejecting God!"

Wrong. Were that doctrine of devils true, Paul would have directed us to Moses, Isaiah or John the Baptist, upheld them as great men of faith who carefully observed God's Law, and then called on us to emulate their sterling example of faith plus obedience to the Law as equaling true justification.

Instead, he bypasses all the great men under the Law and goes straight back to Abraham, whom he points out never kept the Law and was justified by faith only, through a *foreign* righteousness that had nothing to do with his own commandment-keeping. Again...

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

--Rom. 4:1-16.

And his message to those who wish to mix God's Law in *with* faith is:

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

--Gal. 5:9.

“You’re saying it’s a ‘doctrine of devils’ to teach that we should keep God’s commandments?!”

I am saying it is a doctrine of devils to teach that...

1. Christians are under, and bound to, a written, covenantal Law of 10 or 613 commandments.
2. Careful observance of that Law is the Christian's duty in some sort of de facto “partnership” with Christ for salvation.
3. God will review the Christian's observance of that Law at the Last Judgment, and bestow or refuse eternal life based on how well the Christian “kept” those commandments in life.

So no, I am not saying that a teacher who mistakenly focuses on something like the 10 Commandments in an attempt to get people to conform their lives into Christ's image is automatically teaching a doctrine of devils. But on a daily basis, I *do* deal with Catholic, Protestant and Messianic heretics who have taken the notion of “keeping commandments” so far that they have wound up with a false Christ and false way of salvation, and *that* is what I oppose.

“But if you’re saying that people don’t have to keep God’s Law or commandments, you’re contradicting what the New Testament says, and saying it’s okay to go out and sin like the devil!”

Am I? We’ll deal with that in the final appendix.

Appendix V--

“...Where no Law is, there is no transgression.”

Many “Christians” follow a Gospel that ranges from flawed to false because very few apprehend the true Gospel of Grace.

While we may understand and acknowledge Christ as savior, we often fall prey to a deadly trap Paul warns us of:

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.
--Gal. 5: 9.

The leaven he speaks of is diluting faith by mixing Law *with* that faith, which was why he wrote his epistle to the Galatians against this danger.

Conservative Jews, stringent in the observance of the hundreds of commandments God gave through Moses, naturally brought this mindset into their Christianity, and began teaching Gentile converts that they must likewise keep these same commandments to avoid being lost. This forced Paul and the Christian elders to confront the issue of what part obeying God’s Law and commandments played in the life of the believer, and what part they played in obtaining eternal life.

Acts 15 chronicles the debate:

- 1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.
- 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.
- 3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.
- 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.
- 5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.
- 6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.
- 7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe.
- 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;
- 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.
- 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?
- 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.
- 12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.
- 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:
- 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,
 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down;
 and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:
 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my
 name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.
 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.
 19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are
 turned to God:
 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from
 fornication, and from thing strangled, and from blood.
 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the
 synagogues every sabbath day.
 22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their
 own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and
 Silas, chief men among the brethren:
 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren
 send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:
 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with
 words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we
 gave no such commandment:
 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with
 our beloved Barnabas and Paul,
 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.
 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than
 these necessary things;
 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled,
 and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.
 30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the
 multitude together, they delivered the epistle:
 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

Unfortunately, that debate--which *should* have ended there--never ended, but goes on to this day.

The result is that there are many denominations, and hosts of people in them, with doctrines leavening the Gospel of Grace with the Gospel of Law, resulting in endless and varying lists of "commandments" that people supposedly must keep and observe as proof they have real faith, or else as the way to entitle themselves to eternal life.

How is this expressed in Christianity? Well, with some exceptions...

Fundamentalists say it's the 9 Commandments, not including the Sabbath.

Adventists say it's the 10 Commandments, *especially* the Sabbath.

Evangelicals say it's the Golden Rule.

Catholics say it's the ordinances of the Catholic Church.

Mormons say it's the ordinances of the LDS church.

Messianics say it's the 613 laws of Moses.

Calvinists say it's not a question of commandments, but if you aren't keeping them you may not be saved to start with.

Arminians say it's no fixed number, but you better be careful.

All these varying views, no matter how you slice them, ultimately come down to either a false salvation doctrine of:

*Receive it by Grace/yet earn it through Law.
Start with faith/add to it works.*

Or a flawed salvation doctrine of:

*Receive it by Grace/keep it by Law.
Start it by faith/finish it by works.*

The first group is flat-out damned. They have absolutely missed the mark of what the Gospel is, and have embraced the same sort of Gospel as the Judaisers Paul fought against.

To them, salvation is a process, and accepting Christ is only a starting point. After that, they must live properly enough that at the end they obtain the goal of eternal life based on how well they lived out their lives on earth.

People who believe this sort of doctrine will derive it from misunderstanding verses like 1st Peter 1:9.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

“There you go,” they’ll say. “Salvation is a process we merely start through our faith, and we complete that process by faithfully walking in holiness, keeping God’s holy commandments, and persevering in righteousness to the end!”

The catastrophic error these people fall into is confusing and equating sanctification with salvation.

Salvation is an event. Sanctification--that is, being conformed into the image of Christ, and walking out the salvation we already have until we obtain the fullness of it in the resurrection--is a process, and this is what verses like the one above are talking about.

For proof, all we need do is go to places like Ephesians 2:5.

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

In the Greek, this is an absolutely declarative statement, written in the perfect tense, that the people *were* saved--not working toward *being* saved!

Hebrews 10:14 also refutes the doctrine.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

In the Greek, it is more accurately translated: **By one offering, he has forever perfected them that are being sanctified.** Thus, those in the process of sanctification are *already* perfected before God!

So both these verses, among others, demolish any thought that the Christian is undergoing a process of salvation or progressive justification that is completed at death, entitling him to heaven *if* he has lived a life of sufficient holiness to pass muster before God.

Note too when this state of absolute salvation occurred, according to the verse in Ephesians: When the people were “**dead in sins**”! In other words, at the moment they, as sinners, embraced the Gospel message, having done not so little as one act of righteousness or obedience.

It is this misunderstanding of the plan of salvation that propels the heretic into his false Gospel that *faith + his works of obedience* will earn him salvation at the Last Judgment.

Even so, mankind intrinsically likes that sort of doctrine because of pride, and because it is man-centered, rewarding man's efforts at saving himself by passing some sort of divine test.

An earmark of some of these tares (which shows the spirit behind the doctrine) is that they will deny the deity of Christ, and make Jesus less than fully God. Many more will believe in the false doctrine of "soul sleep," and claim God will awaken them to review their earthly deeds at the Last Judgment to see whether they have lived a life of sufficient holiness and obedience to be worthy of eternal life. If they pass muster, they enter in. If they don't, they are cast into the Lake of Fire.

I don't have the time to fully refute the doctrine of "soul sleep," but I'll provide some passages that easily prove it false:

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

--1st Thess. 5:9-10.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

--2 Cor. 12:2-4.

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

--Heb. 12:22-23.

For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

--1st Peter 4:6.

All these passages show clear acknowledgment that the spirit of a man lives on after death, and is not simply asleep in the ground. In particular, Paul says he's not sure whether he went up bodily to heaven or in his *spirit*! If there *could* be a question after that, Hebrews 12 shows the "**spirits**" of the departed saints are in heaven with God, and not dead in the grave!

Thus, the deceived who believe this doctrine live strict religious lives to "do their part," and hopefully endure judgment with their deeds surviving the fire of testing before a scrutinizing God who demands holiness.

"But doesn't Paul teach that in 1st Corinthians 3:15?"

No. Paul is not referring to a judgment to see if salvation will be given or denied; he is referring to a judgment of works whereby the Christian--not the sinner here--will have the "good" deeds he ostensibly did in the name of Christ judged as to what motivation prompted them. Those done for the glory of the Master will be rewarded; those done for selfish or impure motives (Matt. 6:2) will

be “**burned**”--meaning no record of them will be kept in remembrance, and no reward given for them because any “reward” was obtained in life, not in eternity.

Many people will escape the flames of hell and make heaven with no reward beyond that, and Paul is expressing that by using the figure of a man who escapes the flames of a burning home either naked or with only the clothes on his back. He is not speaking of Purgatory or punishment for sin.

The sinner, meanwhile, will also undergo a judgment of works. In *his* case, though, everything he ever did will be judged for a reward--but a reward of punishment. The man without Christ cannot have his works judged to see if somehow he makes it in or offsets his punishment with good deeds! He is consigned to hell before he ever gets to the Judgment, and the only question left is how bad his eternal punishment will be based on what he did, why he did it, and how badly he violated the conscience God gave him to know right from wrong.

The sad fact is, those “Christians” who thus await their works and obedience scrutinized at the Last Judgment to see if God will grant them eternal life will hear Him say, “I reject *all* your works! I reject them because every act of obedience and every act of righteousness you ever performed was leavened with your own self-interest!”

This is the boat we are all in. We fallible humans cannot perform any act of goodness or obedience a God of perfect righteousness can accept to grant entry into eternal life--with or without adding it to the righteousness of Christ. All we do is leaven Christ’s righteousness when we try to add our own righteousness to it!

On our best day, we are nothing more than unprofitable servants doing our duty from less-than-perfect motives that may be sterling in the eyes of man, but ultimately corrupt in the eyes of a perfect God if we rely on those acts to earn His approval.

The reason this entire mindset results in damnation is that it detracts from *full* reliance and faith in the merits of Christ, and redirects our efforts and attention onto *our own* merits.

This is the very heart of leavening the Gospel, and why Paul fought so hard against it to the point some wrongly believe that he even denounced the Law.

You will often discover that people with this false salvation doctrine are reasonably well-read in the Scriptures. They don’t simply have a lack of correct intellectual knowledge of the mechanics of salvation, but often possess a well-developed heresy they both express and defend with Scripture.

This is what removes them from the covering of grace that might be there for an immature sheep who simply has an incorrect belief based on honest, incorrect understanding.

These people, because of their knowledge of Scripture and indoctrination into heresy, have *consciously* embraced and placed faith in a false soteriology they will articulate and defend using verses like 1st Peter 1:9, which we noted. Thus, they have progressed beyond simple truth-doubting, expressed by the Greek word *diakrino*--which can be corrected by teaching and information--and moved into hardened unbelief, or *apeitheia* in the Greek, rejecting the real Gospel in the process.

At that stage, the person is a heretic, and the only cure is repentance and rejection of the “Gospel” he has decided to follow. Failing that, he is headed for damnation with the cults who flat-out deny Christ’s full sufficiency for atonement and righteousness.

“But won’t even the righteous ‘**scarcely**’ be saved?”

When Peter (1st Peter 4:18) makes this statement--building on Prov. 11:31, which speaks of temporal judgment, not specifically eternal judgment--he is not talking about the Last Judgment; he is talking about the judgment to come upon the earth during the Tribulation. (You'll note in the chapter he is dealing with tribulation the saints are *already enduring*, and he goes on to imply even worse is coming--but coming for a divine purpose.) Even Jesus says to pray to be accounted worthy to escape *this* wrath (Luke 21:36)! But the wrath of God against sin shown at the Last Judgment is a wrath the Christian is pre-appointed to be saved against (Rom. 5:9, 1st Thess. 5:9, 1st John 4:17).

Thus, the person who awaits his works being judged to see if he has earned his way into eternal life is doomed from the start.

"Oh, no!" the heretic will say. "I *don't* believe I earn my salvation through my own works! Not at all! *But...*"

Everything that follows the "But" is the leaven in the Gospel.

No religious cult or cultist ever admits they "earn" their salvation through works. They all try to deny it by using some other word like "reward," or else play a word game to guise their deadly theology in language that makes it seem as if full credit *is* given to Christ, yet when the full implications are scrutinized, the soteriology boils down to adding one's own righteousness to Christ's righteousness as the final factor in obtaining eternal life.

This is why Paul's directing us to Abraham is so critically important, and why I wrote *Abraham--our paradigm for justification--who never kept the Sabbath or Law*.

We are to look to Abraham as our pattern of justification with God. As shown by Paul, Abraham kept no Law, lived no life of "holiness" based on keeping commandments and ordinances of some Law, church, or ecclesiastical authority--and was justified and accepted by God on the basis of his faith *alone* by simply believing and accepting what he was told!

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.
--Gal. 3:9.

And because of taking Abraham as our pattern for righteousness and justification, we do not 'work *for* our salvation with fear and trembling' by "pursuing holiness," "keeping God's holy commandments," or doing anything else that the heretic insists we must add to faith to make the cut!

What the heretic misses is that only a superior *foreign* righteousness, independent of our own, will entitle us to eternal life.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.
--Matt. 5:20.

This foreign righteousness was applied to Abraham as a result of *his* faith, and is likewise applied to us as a result of *our* faith!

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
--Rom. 4:5.

...For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.
--Rom. 4:9.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

--Gal. 3:24.

Commandments, deeds, and lifestyle have nothing to do with appropriating the *foreign* righteousness we require for eternal life because *that* form of righteousness is imputed only on the basis of faith--by a work done through the Holy Spirit--and not obedience to some sort of commandments:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

--Gal. 3:2.

That fact is what damns the Child of the Flesh who cannot transition between the Old covenant and the New. For him, it is a divine mixture and fusion of the covenants of Law and Grace, and faith and works--accomplished by the Spirit and his obedience--that fuses all these factors into the gold of righteousness and eternal life. In his false but good-looking Gospel, he is under the Torah/10 Commandments/Church ordinances, etc., and must humbly keep them as best he can with the aid of the Spirit as his role in entering into eternal life. When he fails, God's grace is there to forgive him and help him do better next time, but by persevering to the end in obeying commandments and walking in holiness, he will "inherit" eternal life.

Sounds good, doesn't it? Even a real Christian might be found saying something along those lines. But it is a false hybrid Gospel mixing two covenants of God--with Christ as some sort of bridge--into a Master covenant that supposedly accomplishes what neither covenant, by itself, can do. To the unlearned, it might *seem* to make sense, splitting the difference between Law and Grace, and compromising between both extremes, thus retaining as valid, many verses in the Old covenant demanding obedience to the Law, while diluting others in the New about not being under it.

But it is a *counterfeit* Gospel that Paul calls "**leaven,**" and he demolishes the whole idea in these verses:

And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

--Gal. 3:12.

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

--Gal. 4:24.

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

--Gal. 5: 9.

The heretic sees the two covenants as two sides of the same coin--but Paul shows they are utterly dichotomous. They cannot ever be mated together, and to do so is the heresy in much of Christianity and almost all of Messianic Judaism!

In fact, to *not* mix covenants was the point of the Old Testament commandments against mixing fibers in clothing! It wasn't that God had some offense at mixing linen and wool--the point was to teach how unacceptable it is for us to mix Law with Grace!

Wool is natural, coming from God Himself through the sheep that bears it. Linen is a man-made concoction created by taking plants also given by God, but through man's efforts and work, converting them into material that can be made into clothes to hide his nakedness.

Mixing the two--God's lamb with man's efforts to clothe himself in material he creates--pollutes the Gospel, and will always be rejected by God.

Remember Cain and Abel? Cain's sacrifice represented the offering up of his own efforts: An offering not based on faith in what the lamb represented, but on his own works in planting, growing, and harvesting--from a ground that was cursed to start with.

Assuming Cain really wanted to honor God, his *brother* was the one placing faith in an unblemished lamb as a sacrifice acceptable to God, while Cain, whether or not sincerely--but wrongly, in any event--offered up the works of his own efforts, being rejected as a result.

This is where the heretic of today is, except that he is taking the lamb, stewing it up with his own harvest from the ground, and thinking that mixture is the sacrifice God really wanted.

But no matter how the heretic tries to make his formula work, the recipe is shown by Paul to be a pollution of the sacrifice God requires.

If the heretic tries to claim it is *only* by his obedience and works (the sacrifice of Cain, and the platform of the covenant of Law), the entire New Testament refutes him.

If he then claims mixing both sacrifices by accepting Christ and then adding his own efforts at keeping commandments and laws as the second part of the equation to be "rewarded" with eternal life, Gal. 3:2-3 refutes *that* notion:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

So the notion that starting in the faith, and then *adding* a formal Law (like the 10 Commandments) as the completion of one's walk *in* the faith is likewise refuted.

This is not because there is some evil in the commandments of the Law; it is because the body of those commandments form a covenant that is no longer valid, and submission to the body of those commandments carries with it the potential of conscious or unconscious submission to the covenant they represent--and the covenant that goes *with* them is a rejection of Christ and the *New* covenant!

Thus, the false Gospel holds that works of: obeying commandments, performing acts of righteousness, and pursuing a life of holiness will *gain* one salvation, while the flawed Gospel holds that the same works will keep one from *losing* salvation.

Both positions are problematic, and I say that as one who denies the doctrine of Eternal Security.

While I affirm that one can lose his salvation by apostatizing from Christ, or by allowing his heart to be "**hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**," this does not come simply through *committing* sin--since sin is not imputed to the believer who stands by faith (Rom. 4:8)--but rather through the effects of ongoing serious sin attacking one's saving faith through generating a hardness of heart through resisting the Spirit's call to repentance, allowing sin to pollute the man's spirit (Gal. 6:8, 2 Cor. 7:1, Heb. 3:13, 1st Peter 2:11). Thus, losing salvation through sin is a process, not an event.

"But doesn't the Bible say we must '*perfect holiness*' or we won't see God? Don't we *have* to live holy lives to get into heaven?"

Yes--but here is where the counterfeit parts company from the real. The counterfeit is created from misinterpreting passages like Matthew 19:16-18, James 2:21-24, 1st John 2:3, and Rev. 22:14, and deriving from them a notion that we are bound to some sort of covenantal Law for justification, and by persevering in *keeping* that Law we will have done our part to gain (really, to *earn*) eternal life.

Thus, the heretic “*works for his salvation with fear and trembling,*” and uses the Torah/10 Commandments/Church ordinances, etc., as the standard he must meet to earn his salvation.

And that is the problem:

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

--Rom. 4:5.

Keep in mind that a counterfeit *looks real*; it doesn't, without scrutiny, stand out as a perversion. It may even look so real that it takes a microscope to see that it has no value at all despite looking like the real thing to the naked eye.

That is what makes the tares so dangerous. Many preach righteousness (i.e., “keep the commandments”), act like religious people, and from outward appearances look like the real thing. But they are servants of Satan, teaching a Gospel of Law from their master (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

In the case of salvation, it is the philosophy and doctrine *behind* the lifestyle that reveals whether it is or is not a counterfeit.

The heretic sidesteps the point that it is an imputed *foreign* righteousness--based on faith alone--that ultimately saves the soul from damnation. His emphasis, based on misunderstanding key verses about righteousness and commandments, will be on *his own* righteousness accomplished by keeping the Law, obeying commandments, and doing certain righteous deeds that will somehow be acceptable to God.

All the while, he will be blind to the fact that he is working *for* his salvation, and will think he's simply showing that he has “real” faith.

Meanwhile, a true child of God with bad understanding can also miss that this *foreign* righteousness, based on faith, is the sole path to eternal life and simply start “keeping commandments” and “living righteously” in fear that if he doesn't, he will *lose* his salvation.

This mindset can easily bring the person with this flawed understanding over to the position of a *false* understanding where he *consciously* relies on his own obedience to assure his salvation.

Thus, the false Gospel *earns* one salvation through works, while the flawed Gospel simply *keeps* it through works.

Fortunately, while I never drifted into heresy, I still taught a *flawed* Gospel for decades. Had you asked me before the early '90s how one gets to heaven, I'd have told you something like this:

“Well, Christ atoned for your sins on the cross, and by receiving, through faith, what He did for you, your sins are forgiven, and you will go to heaven. However, if you commit enough serious sin, you may wind up losing your salvation, so the formula for salvation is actually one of faith plus works equals salvation, those ‘works’ being keeping the Ten Commandments, which still apply, although the Sabbath--which we don't have to keep as strictly as the Jews--has been moved to Sunday. Now

you don't *earn* your salvation by keeping commandments, but keeping those sorts of precepts keeps you in a *state* of salvation."

There are so many errors in that statement, it's amazing to me I was ever ignorant enough to speak like that. But like so many, I didn't understand the Gospel of Grace well enough to explain how one could not be freed from having to keep some list of commandments, yet not be free to sin.

So the best I could do was preach faith + the 10 Commandments as a way to stay out of hell.

As I started gearing up to write my study Bible in the mid-'90s, however, I was forced to look at each verse of New Testament Scripture in an in-depth way I never had before, and to test every doctrine I held against what the Scripture was really teaching instead of the way I had always thought or been *told* it was teaching.

When I did that, I was able to correct and move forward in my understanding--starting with rejecting almost all the precepts I had been indoctrinated into through Messianic Judaism, an often-heretical movement that consciously mixes Law and Grace together in an attempt to hold onto both dichotomous covenants.

I then began articulating that salvation, justification and sanctification came by *faith alone*, which, of course, is the proper evangelical--and biblical--understanding of those issues.

But even though Scripturally literate, and certainly no babe in understanding, I still wasn't quite where I needed to be yet, and for years after, would have expressed salvation like so:

"Well, Christ atoned for your sins on the cross, and by receiving, through faith, what He did for you, your sins are forgiven, and you will go to heaven. However, if you commit enough serious sin, you may wind up losing your salvation, so while *only* faith saves, and while we're not saved by *keeping* the Law, the moral commandments of the Law still apply, and if we violate them severely enough, we may lose our salvation."

Better...but still flawed.

I was still hung up on the issue of how one could be freed from having to keep some list of commandments, yet not be free to sin.

So the best I could do was to now preach faith and the importance of "the moral commandments."

I was stuck in this rut until another brother, with better understanding, confronted me about the implications of my good-sounding preaching, and forced me to again lay aside my pre-conceived notions and consider the full implications of what I was preaching.

While it sounded good to say "the moral commandments still apply," I also knew--as did Messianic Judaism--that both the Old Testament (Deut. 12:32) and Paul (Gal. 5:2-3) made it clear that the Law really can't be broken up, and it must stand as written, either all of it or none of it.

So either we are "under" *all* of the Law, or we are "under" *none* of the Law. You cannot pick this commandment or that, uphold it as a mandatory point of right standing with God, while omitting other commandments, and still be walking in the purity of either the old *or* New covenants!

In the case of salvation, it is faith *or* works, Grace *or* Law--never a leavened mixture of them!

You cannot cut the Sabbath from the 10, nor can you cut the 10 from the 613. One is either under or *not under* the Law, or one is either justified or *not justified* by keeping the Law.

It is all or nothing. It is one covenant or the other.

And the answer is, it is grace and faith--and grace and faith *only*:

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all...

--Rom. 4:16.

This acknowledgement sent me back to the Scriptures to try to discern once and for all Paul's revelation of Grace, and though being a serious Bible student for over 40 years, it took that long for God to enable me to truly apprehend the Gospel of Grace and its precepts.

So why is the Gospel of Grace so hard to discern that many religious, biblically literate people and theologians have such a problem seeing it?

There are several reasons those in our Western culture have such a problem with it:

1. Misunderstanding the Scriptures.
2. The King James Bible's misuse of the Greek word *entole*.
3. Misunderstanding John's use of *entole*.
4. Misunderstanding Paul's teachings on the New covenant.
5. Inability to understand that to not be under Law does not give license to sin.

We'll deal with these issues as we go, starting with...

The false Gospel of Matthew 19: Misunderstanding the parable of the Rich Young Ruler.

First, as is typical, the problem starts with a misunderstanding of Scripture--in this case, the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:16-17.

And, behold, one came, and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

The error starts here with many people believing that Jesus was making a soteriological statement for us on how to obtain eternal life, that being to "keep the commandments."

Well, that's exactly what the Pharisees taught too. And if that *is* the real way to eternal life, we don't need Jesus--all we need is Moses!

In fact, I've had Jews throw this verse in my face, and declare that Jesus Himself says that if they keep Moses' Law they'll go to heaven, so Paul is wrong when he disagrees and says Jews need a savior.

Right there, that should show there is a problem with accepting these verses at face value.

But did Jesus really mean what many think He meant? Let's read on.

**18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,
19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**

Well, there you go: If Jesus means what He says here, we need keep only *six* commandments to go to heaven, certainly not 10, let alone 613! (And note how Jesus left out the Sabbath, by the way!)

In fact, just about everyone would agree we should do those things: Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, and even some atheists would say those six things are correct to do, and a “good person” would do them.

Are all those groups, who would promote the very things Jesus said to do here, going to heaven?

No.

So what good is it to do those six things?

None--if you believe that you will earn eternal life by doing them.

Yet here is where error becomes hypocrisy. Not one of the people who base their actual theology on this passage accepts what it says!

Not one!

They’ll believe verse 17 readily enough, but then reject verses 18 and 19!

When we get to *those* verses, suddenly Jesus doesn’t mean what He says at all, but He “really means”...

- Keep the 10 Commandments.
- Keep the written Torah.
- Keep the written Torah *and* the oral Law that goes with it.
- Keep the ordinances of the church.
- Keep a mixture of commandments *and* church ordinances.

There you have it: Verse 17 is true just as written, but then verses 18 and 19 mean everything *except* what they actually say!

Even though Jesus was specifically asked which commandments a man needed to keep to go to heaven, and even though He (supposedly) answered and listed them, the Child of the Flesh has the gall to overrule and reject His answer, then take it upon himself to add in extra commandments to overcome Jesus’ misleading and deceptive statement, because if you believe what He actually *said*, obviously you’ll go to hell for not keeping *enough* commandments!

That also should tell you that there is a problem with the theology many apply to this verse.

Yet most Christian cults, knowing they need not keep the full Law, yet believing they must keep *some* kind of Law, simply conclude that Jesus needs them to contradict His actual answer and speak *for* Him, asserting He really meant, “Keep the 10 Commandments.”

This is because they want to be justified by their own efforts and believe they can keep *10*, but not 613.

Sounds good, but there is a big problem: Jesus quoted from the whole of the Law, and *not* simply the 10 Commandments, nor did He *say* to keep the 10 Commandments. He said to keep *six* commandments.

Five of these are indeed found in the 10, but the last, *and most important of them*, is not!

So are we under the *11* Commandments then?

The cultist now squirms, and if confronted with even more commandments in the Law he knows cannot be ignored (like those against homosexuality), he simply claims they must fall under the 10, so more than 10 commandments still equal *only* 10 commandments!

His bad math also equals bad theology. Yet in his error and ignorance, the cultist has actually stumbled onto what the 10 Commandments actually were: Capstones to the *entire* 613 commandments!

Sabbath commands fell under the 4th commandment; stoning a rebellious son fell under the 6th commandment, returning a neighbor's wandering mule fell under the 10th commandment, and so on.

You cannot separate the 10 from the 613, though Christianity often does, and for the same reasons:

1. A presumption that if you aren't "under" some sort of law, then you must be saying it is all right to sin.
2. A presumption that since we don't need to--and can't--keep *613* commandments, we *can* keep 10.

That might sound good, but we are still confronted with the fact that either Jesus meant what He said, or He didn't.

The fact is, He *didn't* mean what He appears to say--as the cultist, deep down, realizes--which is why he has to "flush out" Christ's words with his own additions to them.

So if Jesus did not mean to teach the way we go to heaven is by keeping the commandments He listed, what did He really mean?

Let's read on.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

The very man Jesus told this to, who affirmed he had kept “**all**” these commandments from his youth, went away with his head hung low because he wasn’t willing to sell all he had and give it to the poor.

And do you notice that neither do the proponents of this verse?

Except for perhaps some priests, monks and nuns, you would have a hard search to find an Evangelical, Fundamentalist, Catholic, Adventist, Messianic, LDS, JW, Armstrongite, or what have you, who accepts verse 17, denies and adds his own list of extra commandments to verses 18 and 19, who then goes on to follow verse 21!

You certainly won’t find any Protestant, “Bible-believing” pastors or lay people who do!

At least, *I’ve* never met any. I did once meet a Matthew 19:17 man who triple-tithed, and thought *that* qualified.

I was impressed at his 30% obedience. If he ever makes it to 100%, he’ll actually have arrived.

Incredibly, these poor, deceived people who are willing to believe the *one* verse to be true *fail at the same point as the man who left with his head hung low*: They won’t sell all *they* have to go follow Christ either! They’ll invent reasons why they don’t have to do that but somehow still be saved, unlike the man in this passage.

For one, they’ll say Christ was only speaking to that particular man, and since he was rich, that command doesn’t apply to *them*.

But yes it does. You can be a Bill Gates, living in an ivory tower, or you can be homeless under a bridge, and be every bit as covetous as the Rich Young Ruler was! A millionaire might trust in his riches, and want to hold onto every dollar he has as his security--and a homeless man might have exactly the same attitude with a five-dollar bill and a shopping cart. (I was once homeless, and in that period would have fought over a 10 cent soda bottle! That’s as covetous as you can get, so how much money you have has *nothing* to do with how covetous a person can be!)

It’s not a question of how much you have--it’s a question of how much what you have has *you*!

The principle of Jesus’ words and teachings to that man thus apply to every one of us, and how much money we have or don’t have plays no part in those words at all! We are all under command not to be covetous and trust in our financial resources as our source, nor let those resources be in the way of serving God.

So why would *that* man leave, walking into damnation because of his covetousness, while the cultist makes his way into heaven by keeping the same commandments the Rich Young Ruler was otherwise keeping?

What makes the Adventist, Messianic, or Fundamentalist any better than *that* man?

They aren’t. They’re in exactly the same boat, the only difference being that *he* walked away in the grief of conviction, while they walk away with their noses in the air thinking they can ignore what Jesus said in verse 21, and just live by their own private doctrine on verse 17!

That man kept the same commandments the cultist is relying on to get *him* into heaven, and had kept them from his youth! In fact, he kept more commandments than the cultist ever *thought* of keeping.

But the truth is, he was actually knee deep in idolatry, violating the first and most important commandment by having his possessions before God in his heart--even though he had kept every commandment Jesus listed.

The proof is that he wasn't willing to sell all he had to follow Christ.

Neither is the cultist, the 10 Commandments-touter, or the Child of the Flesh.

Neither are most of *us*! That's why we need to reject the covenant of Law verse 17 represents--not take it as our salvation theology--and instead cleave to the grace offered in verse 26 as the truly redeemed do.

So my message is that if you make the catastrophic error of thinking Matthew 19:17 is the foundation for entering into eternal life, you better do as Christ commanded in verse 21 and sell all *you* have as well!

If not, you go away damned as an idolater, just as the young man did!

Some of you have never realized that. Now you do, and are accountable for it. You must either remain in a deceived state of being justified by keeping the commandments--even though you will add to Christ's words in verses 18 and 19, then refuse to follow Christ's command in verse 21--or you can leave the Law and the unprofitable strivings over it behind, and let faith *alone* take you into the Promised Land.

"Do I get to keep my possessions then?"

Do you want a greater or *lesser* reward?

Keep your possessions, whether humble or great, and be a good steward of them, using them as God directs to help others--some here, some there--and you will be blessed in heaven (1 Tim. 6:17-18).

Or, sell all you have, give it to the poor, and come follow where Christ directs, and you will have a *great* reward in heaven.

But if you choose to live under Matthew 19:17, then you must also live under Matthew 19:21!

Thus, Jesus was never intending to teach that this man--or anyone else--would make heaven by obeying some basic moral precepts. He was simply repeating what that man--and the Jews--actually believed, but was showing the man wasn't as sinless as he thought, nor was he as worthy of eternal life as his religion held.

This is shown in another incident related in Luke 10:

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Now we're down to *two* commandments--neither of which is even *in* the 10 Commandments!

So in the strictest sense, while Jesus didn't mean what many think He did in Matthew 19, if one could keep both *these* core commandments in Luke 10 to God's standard--as the man who answered Jesus thought he was doing--he *would* gain eternal life.

But that Jesus was ultimately showing that no one will gain heaven by keeping even two commandments is shown in His revelation of what God's actual standard of righteousness is:

**Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed
adultery with her already in his heart.**

--Matt. 5:27-28.

That's how high the standard of success is, and how low the threshold for failure is.

Even a thought, never carried further, makes one every bit as guilty and subject to judgment as the man who carries out the thought with his body.

This is why none of us ever can, or will, enter into eternal life by "keeping the commandments." We will always fall short, and always require atonement for our sins and an imputed righteousness to override our own intrinsic *unrighteousness*!

Beyond that, no New Testament writer after Jesus ever literally makes a statement like, "Keep the commandments to enter into eternal life!" A verse in Revelation nearly says that, but the pedigree of that verse is bad, and modern Bibles use a more reliable reading that does not carry the same questionable implications to soteriology. So if you look at the panoply of the New Testament beyond Jesus' words in these passages, you will never find His words, "keep the commandments." repeated by Peter, John, James, Jude, or Paul in a direct context of gaining eternal life *by* keeping them.

The KJV's misuse of the word *entole*.

After misunderstanding Christ's words, another major factor in the formation of a flawed/false Gospel is the horrendously bad choice of the King James translators to repeatedly render some Greek words, especially *entole*, as "commandment(s)," which influenced subsequent English Bibles into following the same error.

While *entole* often does mean some command or precept in the Law, it also means things like *exhortations, instructions or orders*.

Here are some of examples where the word should never have been rendered "commandment(s)":

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

--John 10:18.

And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed .

--Acts 17:15.

Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

--1 Cor. 7:25.

Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

--Col. 4:10.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;

--1 Tim. 1:1.

That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

--1 Tim. 6:14.

That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

--2nd Peter 3:2.

It should immediately be apparent that in none of the cases listed, does the word “**commandment**” refer to some commandment in the actual Law. Every one of those instances should have been translated *entole* as “order”--or, at best, “command.”

Never “**commandment**”!

To our minds, when we see the word “**commandments**,” we automatically call to mind things like the 10 Commandments. This natural prejudice helps us err in our misunderstanding, because we connect the Law/10 Commandments to that word, and immediately tend to presume the writer is talking about the Law.

This gives birth to heresy, because *you must let the context of the passage determine whether the writer actually means some sort of general order or exhortation, or literally some biblical “commandment”!*

Misunderstanding John's use of *entole*.

This bad choice on the part of the King James translators carried over into the writings of John, which are incorrectly used to form the false Gospel of the cultists.

John doesn't always use the Greek language as other writers do. As I point out in my commentary on John 6:28, he uses *ergon* (“**works**”), for instance, differently than Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Likewise, with *entole*. While other writers use it for commandments in the Law, or for general orders that having nothing to do with the Law, John shows in his Gospel that he only uses it for orders and instructions, and never for commandments *of* the Law.

Below are all his uses of the word *entole* in his Gospel.

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

--John 10:18.

Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

--John 11:57.

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

--John 12:49.

And I know that his commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

--John 12:50.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

--John 13:34.

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

--John 14:15.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

--John 14:21.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

--John 15:10.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

--John 15:12.

Unlike other writers, when John uses *entole* in his Gospel, he never uses it in the sense of commandments of the Law, including the 10 Commandments, but rather as commands or orders.

Other writers who *do* use *entole* as a plural for “**commandments**” use it most of the time to refer to commandments of the Law, and on occasion for commands in a general sense. But when they use the word as a plural, they typically use it in a clear context so there is no real question of meaning:

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

--Matt. 5:19.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

--Matt. 15:9.

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

--Matt. 19:17.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

--Matt. 22:40.

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

--Mark 7:7.

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

--Mark 10:19.

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

--Mark 12:29.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

--Luke 1:6.

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

--Luke 18:20.

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

--Acts 1:2.

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

--1 Cor. 7:19.

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

--1 Cor. 14:37.

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

--Eph. 2:15.

Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

--Col. 2:22.

Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

--Col. 4:10.

For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

--1 Thess. 4:2.

Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

--Titus 1:14.

As can quickly be noted, in every case where *entole* is used for “**commandments**,” the context--whether that of commandments in the Law, or normal orders--is obvious, and there is no real ambiguity. Fourteen times, it is used to refer to commandments of some sort of law (God's or man's), and three times it refers to simple orders.

John stands out as being different from other writers, however. *His* Gospel reveals that he never refers to the Law by the word “commandments” (*entole*); he only refers to the Law as a whole (“Law”) using *nomos*. When he uses *entole*, he only uses the word to refer to orders, rather than

biblical commandments of the Law. In the nine times he uses *entole* in his Gospel, the four times he uses it as a plural (“**commandments**”), he employs it when Jesus is telling the apostles to obey the orders He personally has given them:

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

--John 14:15.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

--John 14:21.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

--John 15:10.

John is clearly not referring to biblical commandments of the Law in these passages. While some get confused by 15:10, Jesus refers to two different sorts of “**commandments**”: His “**commandments**,” and the Father’s “**commandments**.” We cannot attribute the Torah/10 Commandments to God, and some other codified Law to Christ that excludes Him from equal attribution regarding the Mosaic Law. The Law is the Law, and it represents the righteousness of the same Trinity. Thus, “**commandments**” in 15:10 must refer to orders or exhortations, not to commandments of the Law.

John 14:15 and 14:21 likewise cannot be referring to the Torah/10 Commandments for the same reason: “**My commandments**” must reasonably have a meaning along the lines of, “my orders/teachings/exhortations,” rather than, “**Thou shalt not steal**.”

Failure to understand his established pattern of *entole* in his Gospel gives birth to a misunderstanding of his use of the word in his epistles and Revelation. Many Bible students, tricked by a biased English translation, do not realize John is referring only to “commands” (in the sense of following orders and precepts given by Christ), rather than literally to biblical *commandments*:

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

--1 John 2:4.

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

--1 John 2:7.

Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

--1 John 2:8.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

--1 John 3:22.

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

--1 John 3:23.

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

--1 John 3:24.

And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

--1 John 4:24.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.

--1 John 5:3.

I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

--2 John 1:4.

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

--2 John 1:5.

And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

--2 John 1:6.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

--Rev. 12:17.

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

--Rev. 14:12.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.**

--Rev. 22:14.

**** The best manuscripts of Revelation have “Wash their robes”—referring back to Rev. 7:14—rather than “Do His commandments.”**

As noted, some of these verses, in English, could reasonably be understood as referring to commandments of some sort of law. But as I have also tried to show, if even if you do view “**keep his commandments**” or “**commandments of God**” as referring to a body of Law, you shipwreck the moment you try to define what Law that is.

If you say it’s the 10, you exclude critical commandments the New Testament affirms, including those against homosexuality and incest, and Jesus’ summation of the Law and the Prophets. Your only recourse then is to throw in all those extra commandments “under” the 10, and then try to claim much more than 10 commandments still equal only 10 commandments because you have to keep the number at 10, but you also have to keep all these other commandments you know you’re stuck with!

If you say it’s the 613, you run afoul of the fact that if you accept the commandment of circumcision, you fall from Grace! You also commit apostasy by upholding animal sacrifices as valid biblical commandments so long as there is a Temple to make them in (as was the case for the first 40 years of the faith), which treats the blood of Christ as inferior and insufficient (Heb. 10:1-9).

If you try to create some list on your own authority of “moral commandments” in the body of the Law that must be kept, you *have* no authority to do that, and the Bible does not do it for you.

Since the legalists universally dismiss the commandments given by the Holy Spirit in Acts 15, and go back to the Old Testament for the “real” commandments, they wind up stuck with either the 10 or the 613, and if they choose either, their argument collapses when weighed against the totality of the New Testament.

“But Jesus said, *While heaven and earth remain, not one jot or tittle will pass from the Law--and John said, Sin is transgression of the Law, so some Law must be in force to transgress against!*”

These are common deceptions spread by Children of the Flesh.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

--Matt. 5:18.

Messianics and Sabbatarians often throw Jesus’ words here at me--but they always quote only the first half of the verse, and seem oblivious to the words, “**till all be fulfilled**.”

Apparently, Jesus didn’t really speak the last four words there. At least, these people never quote them to me, but quote only the words *up* to them.

The answer why is obvious: They know it overturns their theology. Deep down, they know Jesus fulfilled all the Law in His life and on the cross, and so all *has* been fulfilled!

But even though it is the natural conclusion to their bad theology, they know better than to advance the view that Jesus hasn’t fully completed the plan of redemption, so they quote half the verse to help justify the notion that, “the Law will last until heaven and earth pass away.”

So too with John’s words in 1st John 3:4...

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

They’ll quote the second half of the verse, and usually ignore the first half that says sin is “**also**” transgression of the Law. That part of the verse is important because it shows John is not writing to say, “We must keep the Law because to fail to keep a commandment of it means we have committed sin!” Instead, writing to a mostly Jewish audience (see 3rd John 1:7), John’s point is that living in continuous, ongoing, unrepentant sin is “**also**” the same as a Jew who abandons the Law to live in Lawlessness (see 3:6), and carries the same ultimate penalty: death.

“Then what does all this mean? That we don’t have to keep *any* commandments of God?! How do we know what sin is without a list of commandments to teach us?”

Quite the contrary--we must strive to implement every word in Scripture God has given us to develop and show faith, hope and charity, and to represent His way of thinking. Many of those exhortations do happen to be “commandments” found in the Old Testament. However, the panoply of New Testament passages teach us what sort of “sin” and what sort of behavior the New covenant is really concerned with.

So do we abstain from theft, adultery and murder? Certainly.

Do we feed the hungry? Certainly.

Do we avoid tale-bearing? Certainly.

Do we lend to our neighbor in need? Certainly.
 Do we make sure we don't light a fire or cook on the Sabbath? No.
 Do we eat only clean meats before our God? No.
 Do we allow our beards to grow naturally, without trimming them? No.
 Do we shun "pagan" holidays like Christmas or Easter, and hypocritically keep the Feasts in the Law--most of which require animal sacrifice we rationalize away as not having to perform? No.
 Do we wear fringes on our garments to make sure we don't forget the 613 commandments? No.

Thus, real Christians never pervert the New covenant by taking a codified Law like the 10 Commandments or Torah, and upholding that Law as a canon of righteousness we must fulfill to be righteous before God, or as a measuring rod to obtain eternal life. Instead, we implement every exhortation in the New Testament relating to morality, faith, hope and charity. Then we take what is taught in the *Old* covenant, sift it and any doctrinal teachings of our leaders through the *New* covenant and *New* Testament, and use what remains as guidelines for proper living. (Where there are grey areas not clearly relating to essential teachings on morality, faith, hope or charity--for instance, the issue of corporal punishment in Prov. 23:13-14 or the question of whether it's allowable to fight in a war--Christians may decide on their own, and follow their conscience.)

When we do that, we *won't* go out and steal, kill and commit adultery--but not because we are under a Law of commandments we must keep, but because our desire is to live properly before God, despite being freed from the obligation to give *any* set of commandments authority over us.

But if we err and *do* uphold a Law as a canon of approval before God, we leaven the New covenant, and fall from Grace. Thus, while we do not have license to sin, and while we do, in a sense, technically "keep the commandments," we must never define that as "keeping the Torah" or "keeping the Ten Commandments"--because no one *can* keep the whole of the Law even if they wanted to, and to imply that we *do* keep some sort of codified law is to imply, and possibly teach, that we keep a false salvation covenant that cannot save us to start with! (And the truth is, we actually "keep" much more than simply *ten* "commandments" if you totaled them all up)!

"But by the Law is the knowledge of sin, so we need the Law to teach us what sin is!"

I've actually had Messianic Jews, deep in deception, quote Romans 3:20, thinking that Paul there is upholding the Law as the vehicle we need in order to know what sin is. To those who think that, I suggest you read the whole chapter, especially verse 21, in context. The "**knowledge of sin**" Paul speaks of is the curse the Law brings, which awakens sin in those exposed to it (Rom. 7:7-11, and 1 Cor. 15:56), which is why the righteousness "**outside**" the Law comes through faith, not man's attempts at obedience, a concept hosts of people cannot grasp.

Paul's misunderstood teachings on the Law.

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
 --1 Cor. 15:56.

...Where no law is, there is no transgression.
 --Rom. 4:15.

...Sin is not imputed when there is no law.
 --Rom. 5:13.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ...
 --Rom. 7:4.

Uncomfortable verses like these bother the cultists. They know they have a problem with them so they either ignore them, pervert them, or else deny they refer to the Law *they* uphold (i.e., the 10 Commandments). To them, Paul must speaking of the minutiae in Mosaic law.

But *was* Paul referring to something other than the 10 Commandments in this passage? Let's see....

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

--Rom. 7:4-13.

The last time I checked, "**Thou shalt not covet**" was in the 10 Commandments, not some "transitory civil and ceremonial Law written on parchment, and fulfilled at the cross."

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

--2 Cor. 3:7-8.

The last time I checked, the only part of the Law "**written and engraven in stones**" was the 10 Commandments, not some "transitory civil and ceremonial Law written on parchment, and fulfilled at the cross."

So when Paul uses language like "**abolished**" or "**done away**," or that we are a "**dead**" to the Law, he absolutely is referring to not only the "civil and ceremonial Law," but also the 10 Commandments some deceived people bind themselves to.

Are the "doers of the Law" justified?

"But Paul said, '*the doers of the Law shall be justified*,' and '*by faith we establish the Law*,' so he taught we must keep God's holy Law!" says the cultist.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ...

--Rom. 7:4.

Being “**dead to the law**” doesn’t mean we are alive to it more than ever, now we have come to faith! So let’s deal the verses misused by the Children of the Flesh to promote their false Gospel...

For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.
--Rom. 2:13.

To the cultist, this means, “We must keep (the Torah/10 Commandments/Church ordinances, etc.) to be justified!”

If so, it is odd that the same Paul in Chapter 3, verse 20 goes on to say: **Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

So what *did* Paul mean?

As he goes on to show in chapter 2, even the Gentiles can “**do**” the Law (as Paul says in verse 14) without ever hearing the name of Christ, let alone placing faith in Him!

The problem is, cultists have a heretical view of what the Law--in both Old *and* New Testament ages--was and is, and how one “does” it.

First, Paul was writing this chapter to Jews who knew the Law (all 613 commandments), and knew that God commanded *all* that law be *heard* and *obeyed*:

Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.
--Deut. 4:6.

Heard therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.
--Deut. 6:3.

And the old testament verse he alludes to in so far as justification goes, is Deut 6:25...

And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

But did Israel--or *any* man--ever keep the Law to God’s ultimate standard? What does the Old Testament say?

Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

--Jer. 7:25-28.

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them....

--Malachi 3:7.

So the answer is: No, Israel never kept the Law, and thus was never justified as *doers* of the Law! They were commanded to “do” the Law...it would be to their righteousness if they “did” the Law--but no generation of Israel ever “kept” or “did” the Law, which God acknowledges in Malachai!

So yes--the *doers* of the Law shall be justified...but no one *can* “do” the Law to God’s standard and *be* justified, which is why God never removed sickness from the Jews as I pointed out earlier!

Conundrum? No. The conundrum is that the cultist, in his deception, cannot transition beyond the covenant of works to that of grace.

So let’s now see what Paul goes on to say about the *sort* of “Law” he’s talking about, and how one “does” it:

**For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:
Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.**

--Rom. 2:14-15.

Oh--so Gentiles can know and do the “Law” instinctively without being taught the Law, or even hearing the name of Christ!

Is that “Law” the 613 commandments, like not trimming the corners of one’s beard, or boiling a kid in its mother’s milk?

No. Such commandments like that aren’t intrinsic to humanity at all.

“Oh--it must be the 10 Commandments then!”

Closer, but still no.

You see, the 10 Commandments (which I’ve shown were simply were the capstones to the other 603) are “**the ministration of death**”--not something we must still cleave to!

“So what Law is Paul talking about fulfilling, and what does ‘**keep his commandments**’ mean then?”

It means to do everything God said to do to live a life pleasing to Him. That includes living morally, in accord with many written commandments--but we are not “under” the body of those commandments as any part of justification. The body of those commandments has been transcended by the perfect Law--a Law that cannot be written down and observed, because *that* sort of Law must come as a gift of God:

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

--Rom. 5:55.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

--Rom. 13:8.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

--Rom. 13:10.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

--Gal. 5:14.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

--James 1:25.

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

--James 2:8.

As Paul goes on to point out in Romans 2, God has placed in the conscience of all humanity the fundamental precepts of morality (don't steal, kill, commit adultery) many of which--but not all of which--may be listed in the 10 Commandments. But no Gentile, in and of himself, ever concluded independently it was righteous to not kindle a fire on the Sabbath, to maintain absolute rest, and to stone anyone who works on it. What all men intrinsically *do* know is that it is wrong to steal, murder, cause harm, commit adultery, and so on. Thus, the conscience of every person, having been placed there by God, lets man know in his heart when he is doing right or wrong. And men, whether taught "the Law" or not, will all be punished in eternity by how they violated those aspects of morality:

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

--Rom. 2:12.

In the Old Testament, God rebuked and judged the Gentile nations for corruption or lapses in morality--but never for violating "commandments" like the Sabbath or dietary laws, which are not intrinsic to humanity in the way moral imperatives are. These sorts of "laws" are unique to Israel and the institution of the Torah.

The key factor in keeping the morality God does enjoin upon humanity lies in the fact that God's intrinsic moral laws are based upon, and function through, *love*--which is universal, and needs no Torah, no 10 Commandments, or any *other* list of commandments to define it because love automatically fulfills all those commandments and the morality those commandments seek to produce! At best, a list of commandments is useful only to help babes in understanding learn the precepts of God's morality, how they have violated that morality and face judgment, and how they are incapable of keeping that morality well enough to earn eternal life without Christ's atonement.

This is why, while the morality of the 10 Commandments is fine to teach and extol, they can never function as a valid covenant of "Law" that Christians are required to "keep" in the dispensation of Grace and the *New* covenant, because the authority of the covenant those commandments represented has passed away:

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

--Gal. 3:24-26.

For if that [the 10 Commandments] which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

--2 Cor. 3:11.

It *had* to pass away as a covenant and binding Law...

Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

--Rom. 4:1-15.

And because...

For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

--Rom. 5:13.

But with those truths come *this* truth:

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

--Rom. 6:15.

Read that verse carefully. If you will deny that when Paul says we're not under the Law--including the 10 Commandments--then you are saying Paul is referring only to the civil and ceremonial Law many claim is abolished, and so violation of *those* civil and ceremonial commandments would be the "**sin**" he mentions here!

Did you get that? Only if Paul refers to *all* the Law--civil, ceremonial *and moral*--does Romans 6:15 work.

Otherwise, Paul is saying we should not "**sin**" by trimming the corners of our beards, nor should we wear clothing made of different materials.

And some Judaisers do teach that, by the way.

Yet why does Paul include all--even the moral Law--in his denial that Christians are "**under the Law**?"

Because...

...Where no law is, there is no transgression.

--Rom. 4:15.

And...

...Sin is not imputed when there is no law.

--Rom. 5:13.

Now--as he goes on to say--that doesn't mean we can violate the Law's moral precepts even though we're not under the Law as a body.

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

--Rom. 6:15.

But how, one might ask, can we not be “under” the Law, yet not be free to violate it?

The answer, again, is in Romans 2, which teaches that the morality of the Law has been, and is built into, the human heart and--with or without the 10 Commandments or Torah--mankind intrinsically knows it is wrong to steal, commit adultery, murder, etc., and this is what we must avoid.

The 10 Commandments have *nothing whatever* to do with those moral imperatives being in the heart of man because those moral imperatives come from the nature of God, and not by revelation *of* the 10 Commandments! Revelation of the 10 Commandments as a Law to be kept simply awakens the sin nature (Rom. 8:9)!

So then, the Children of the Flesh who will not let go of the Law for justification will always persecute the Children of the Spirit, accusing them of being Lawless. This is because the Children of the Spirit, having the true Law of God in their hearts empowered *by* the Spirit, are free--and the Children of the Flesh will always think the bondage *they* are under is the *real* freedom.

So far as “establishing the Law through faith” goes, this is yet another misunderstood passage. The word “**establish**” is not even in the text; a business-related word about a balance scale is. Paul’s point is that faith accomplishes what the Law cannot: Make men righteous. And that critical precept in Christianity, which we derive from the Law and what it teaches (Gal. 3:24), is what we affirm and take our stand upon, rather than our obedience to the list of Dos and Don’ts in the Law that cannot save us or keep us in right standing with God. (See the full commentary for Romans. 3:31.)

“Well, unlike an Antinomian like you, I know and keep God’s commandments!”

No you don’t. I know a long list of deceived people who think exactly that way, and the truth is that they’re every bit as deceived as the Pharisees before them. Anyone who says that he “keeps God’s commandments”--in the sense of a codified Law like the 10 commandments or Torah--proves by that very statement that he does not. To “keep” any commandment of God requires not only an outward observance, but also inward observance in thought and word, concepts the cultists miss by thinking like the Pharisees before them who held that only if you commit the *act* of sin do you *actually* sin!

Yet Jesus showed that not only must the commandments be kept in thought and word--they must be kept in *perfect* observance in thought and word (Matt. 5:27-28 and Matt. 12:36-37)!

No one but Christ can meet that standard. What *we* can do is apprehend what the Scriptures teach, then go out to live a moral life--not regulated by observance of specific commandments, or by a vague, carnal understanding of right and wrong subject to our own ungodly wills, but by new hearts and minds the Spirit has awakened in us, which will, as we yield to Him, conform our lives to what the commandments seek, but fail, to produce.

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

--Jer.31:33.

Then, when we reach the status of a man mature in Christ, we won’t be counterfeits who look religious on the outside by standing out for the way we apparently “obey commandments” and avoid “worldly” things and activities--but as a person who from the inside is a living epistle of Christ in his manner of life, with a conscience made alive by the Spirit, sensitive to the promptings of right and wrong by the Spirit as we walk with God:

And that takes time. Lots of time.

The true canon of righteousness.

All these misunderstandings about what righteousness really is arise because the Child of the Flesh sees “the Law” or “the commandments” as the real canon of righteousness.

As Paul shows, while God *has* given us commandments in Scripture, the “Law” and covenant formed *around* those commandments is not the true “Law” by which God ultimately judges humanity, nor is that “Law” and covenant apprehendable by a Gentile who otherwise has a capacity to perceive and follow or reject God’s *actual* Law! As we see taught in Romans 2, *the real Law is not the tortuous minutiae, but the core aspects of righteousness that come from the attributes of God Himself, which are placed in the human conscience, and merely written down and illustrated through the written Law.* Man has this “natural law of love” in his conscience from being made in the image of God, so every man—even if his conscience somehow becomes seared to the truth--intrinsically knows, or knew at some point, it is wrong to steal, kill, commit adultery, and so on, and those sorts of “commandments” are the ones we must not violate to avoid being marked as transgressors.

And that was the case even *before* the Law was ever given:

For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

--Rom. 5:13.

And that is the case now that *again* there is technically “no Law.”

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

--Rom. 6:15.

Sin can, and does, still exist even though the Law is “**abolished**”!

Why?

Because the Torah had nothing to do with certain acts being sin before, during, or after its existence.

Those things were always wrong, such as when Cain--long before Moses--killed his brother, which was sin even though he was not “under the Law” and had never even *heard* of the Law. But he intrinsically knew he was doing wrong because murder violates God’s intrinsic morality, a morality Cain knew in his conscience even if he had never read the Torah. Thus, he was subject to judgment for violating what he knew in his heart to be wrong, and God acknowledges that Cain intrinsically knew “the right things to do,” and so had no excuse even though there was no formal Law yet:

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

--Gen. 4:7.

So sin existed when there was no Law, and Cain knew exactly what sin was because God had given him a conscience to know right from wrong.

So too now, a Christian who goes out and murders someone—even though he’s not under the Law--is still committing transgression just as Cain did, because murder was a transgression before anyone ever heard of Moses, and it will always be a transgression independent of the Law. The difference is, believers who reject unrighteousness and walking in *ongoing, unrepentant rebellion* are never viewed by God as having the status of transgressors despite the sins they still commit, nor is sin imputed to them because they are not under the Law (Romans 4:15 and 5:13). But even the most

righteous of us is still capable of committing *acts* of transgression in thought, word or deed, and God may inflict corrective judgment on us *for* those acts of transgression (Heb. 12:8) even though we stand, unmoved, in the status of those justified by faith when we commit those individual acts.

Where we part company from Cain, who though not under the Law and thus technically not having sin imputed to him on some levels by transgressing a Law--but yet unsaved and not in covenant with God because his actions showed he did not walk and act in faith, but rather as a transgressor--is that we have access to a *foreign* righteousness attributed to us as Abel (and all Old Testament saints) did, who, unlike Cain, was in covenant with God *because* of his faith (Heb. 11:4). (It may have taken time for the full benefits of that righteousness to be manifested in them after the cross, but through their faith they all looked forward to that time and the regeneration that would come through Christ's atonement, and His sending the Spirit into fallen humanity.)

Many people "**unskilful in the word of righteousness**" make a deadly error of presuming that forgiveness of sin, and avoiding sin thereafter, is all that's needed to gain eternal life.

Not so.

One must also have the regeneration of the Holy Spirit in his own fallen human spirit, and become "**born again**." Lacking this, he might not be accountable for one sin, but yet will die in a fallen, unregenerate state. Then, at the resurrection, he will have whatever attributes of his conscience that were given by God removed, leaving him in a state of perfected corruption fit only for the Lake of Fire even though no sin is actually attributed to him.

That--unless he somehow repented and came to faith in God--will be Cain's fate, because forgiveness of sin alone won't save you from damnation!

"Well, Hebrews Ten says if we willingly commit sin, there remains *no more sacrifice for us*--any salvation we had is lost! So we must keep God's holy Law, and never violate it, except by accident, or we will be damned!"

**For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,
But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.**

--Heb. 10:26-27.

Often the heretic will misapply the warning against rebellion in Hebrews 10, and say something like, "Once we come to Christ, only accidental and unintentional sins can be forgiven--anyone who willingly commits a sin after knowledge of the truth has blasphemed the Spirit, and cannot be forgiven because *there is no more sacrifice for sin*!"

Thus, their "Gospel" is only for the strong. There is no place for the weak.

Friends, I don't have time to refute this "gutter Gospel." Just read the sections on justification. The bottom line is, teachings like that are sewage from the heart of Satan, out the mouths of his tares, trying to bring the sheep under condemnation. The fool who believes that "Gospel" is himself damned, and at the Last Judgment will see how pathetic his 10 Commandments-keeping really was. Then he'll be thrown into the Lake of Fire, while those he denounced as sinners excluded from the Kingdom will march into it.

Goats who believe this are “**unskilful in the word of righteousness.**” They also fall prey to one of the greatest dangers that befalls those who seek right standing with God by keeping His commandments:

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

--1 Cor. 15:56.

Law empowers flesh, while Spirit empowers spirit.

The tares who emphasize keeping “God’s holy Law” to be assured of salvation will wind up in one of two states: Either knee deep in sin through that Law empowering their sin nature (Romans 7:5), or knee deep in the idolatry of Gal. 5:20--an idolatry the Pharisees had--arising from a spirit of empowered pride that manifests in self-justification and self-righteousness. For these latter wretches, what they will think is Spirit-empowered sanctification will actually be flesh-empowered idolatry that may look like real holiness but is actually a counterfeit--as is the God they follow, which is created in their own image.

So, despite what these deceivers teach, there is *always* forgiveness for the man willing to repent! That man might bear some natural consequences for his sin, but God is always ready to forgive even the most wanton sinner because of the atonement of Christ--and whether or not that man is a “Christian,” when he sins, is irrelevant.

“But what’s the problem with being ‘under’ the 10 Commandments as many people and denominations teach? Isn’t it good to uphold those commandments?”

The problem is in upholding any written “Law” as binding and covenantal upon Christians. The moment *any* Law exists that one binds himself to, that person leaves the status of a man justified by faith alone (Gal. 2:18-19) and now stands in the status of a transgressor before God because he has bound himself to the authority *of* that Law, while being incapable of *keeping* that Law to God’s pure standard because that Law will empower his sin nature in opposition to what the Law is meant to do:

Rom. 8:7 **What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.**

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment [in the 10 Commandments!], wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment [in the 10 Commandments] came, sin revived, and I died.

Note that! The principle in the 10 Commandments *killed* Paul!

10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

Again, the principle in the 10 Commandments brought *death* to Paul, not life and right standing with God!

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Why?

Because Paul--and us--have a fallen sin nature that will be with us until the resurrection. And any Law we bind ourselves to and try to keep will *empower* our sin nature even further! Coming to Christ does *not* end that sin nature and the Law’s magnification *of* that sin nature.

If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.
 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.
 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.
 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.
 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:
 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.
 --Rom. 8:16-23.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.
 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.
 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.
 --Rom. 7:4-6.

That is the problem with upholding “**the ministration of death**”--the 10 Commandments--as “God’s holy Law” or “God’s Royal Law” that we must keep and be under to be assured of our right standing *with* God.

“Well, I believe God has given us His holy Law to we believers to keep and uphold, in order to separate us from the world, and to show we have *real* faith!”

**Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,
 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;**
 --1 Tim. 1:9-10.

That is whom the Law is for: Not for real followers of Christ, but for the unredeemed.

Why?

So that the sinner can be confronted in a way he cannot explain his way around, both with the fact he is condemned as a sinner; and secondly, that he cannot keep the Law that condemns him well enough to be acceptable to God on that basis, for he needs Christ’s *perfect* righteousness and *perfect* atonement applied to him and his sin!

And that is the difference between truth and error. Between the real and the counterfeit. Between the Child of the Flesh and the Child of the Spirit.

Once a man knows that the Law condemns and kills him, he is freed from it when he turns to new life in Christ through repentance, faith and baptism. For him, he is now a new creation entitled to walk in Paul’s great revelation that:

...Where no law is, there is no transgression.

Some Errata, including *What Christians Never Knew About Porn.*

What Christians Never Knew About Porn.

A while back, I was reading some article on the Internet and at its end of was a link to a story along the lines of *20 Porn Stars That Died Untimely Deaths*. It looked interesting so I clicked on it and up came 20 young women, none of whom I'd ever heard of. (Any Adult stars I might know of would be from the 1970s-80s when you either went to a theater to watch it or rented a VHS tape.) All were contemporary stars of the last few years in their 20s-30s, and had died of overdoses, murder or suicide.

That was sad and tragic.

According to Christianity Today, over 50% of the men who attend services, and some 40% of the women, at least occasionally view Porn. While that sounds high to me (I'd think half that would be more accurate), even if I'm right and not naive, that's a whole lot of people that show this is a serious issue.

Of pastors, reportedly around 20% admit to ongoing issues with it.

Ominously, however, around half of the Christians using it claim they are "comfortable" with viewing it.

This doesn't shock me. And I'll state that, for my part, I never pass judgment or put down anyone who has personal struggles with it. My attitude tends to be that but for the grace of God I could be in the same place, and so for my part I feel sympathy and understanding when someone admits to issues with it.

Humans are sexual beings with hormones. Gay, Straight, magazines or videos--I don't look down on anyone who has wrestled with this or other sex issues. In fact, make of this what you will, I once got into an argument with God over it.

"Well, God," I said, "guys are just made that way. They like Porn. They really can't help it. I think you should be more understanding about it..."

Well...God didn't agree with me. In fact, *I* was the one who needed to change my attitude, and so, while I have sympathy, I uphold and stand on what *He* thinks on the matter. It's not okay. He doesn't approve. He doesn't tolerate it. He warns of punishment for it, and while I wouldn't say using it will automatically send a Believer to hell, it will affect one's life and spiritual well being on some level and is something that needs to be repented of.

More importantly--struggling with sin is one thing, but justifying or accepting sin is another. The people who are "comfortable" with it are in a dangerous place. They're giving place to the devil with that attitude, and you can only give so much place before you can conceivably drift from sin

with a small “s” to salvation-risking Sin with a capital “S”. At the very least, I would encourage anyone to look at this as something they should at least struggle against. God can work with that.

He can’t work with someone *justifying* what they’re doing.

He can only judge that...

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

--Heb. 10:31.

There is one last thing I want to note about this that I wager you’ve never thought about: You may be a Christian, viewing that stuff, and fortunate enough to have your sin about it under the Blood to the extent you’ll endure no more punishment than the non-damnational judgment God sends to correct you. But the people in those videos *aren’t* saved. The women I mentioned tragically dead from suicide, murder and overdoses--barring a miraculous acceptance of Christ at the moment of death--died in their sins and now await the Lake of Fire for their sins.

Go to some of the big Porn sites and you’ll note some of those videos have tens of thousands or even *millions* of views! If some of those performers die without ever accepting Christ and being forgiven for those videos, when they go to Judgment they’re going to have their damnation increased for every person who ever viewed their work. Some women will literally have millions of sins added to the penalty for their own sins when they face judgment for making their videos! They won’t simply be judged for the illicit sexual acts they were involved with in *making* a video and end it with that; they’ll be punished for everyone who ever *watched and enjoyed* their video, thereby committing sin for it!

“Huh?! Why do you say *that*?!”

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

--Matt 16:6-7.

Jesus reveals that if someone causes a Believer to sin, that person will be judged for it. He does go on to solemnly warn the *Christian* against sinning, so he has *his* part to do in avoiding temptation, but the cause of sinning--the tempter--is going to be sorry for it whether he knows it or not, and whether he (or she) knew the implications of what they were doing, or not!

“Wouldn’t that just be talking about tempting Christians then?”

No. Right is right and wrong is wrong no matter who does it to whom. This verse in direct context might point out how God is especially offended if someone causes a young Believer to stumble, but that doesn’t mean Gentiles are fair game and somehow an agent of sin tempting unbelievers into sin isn’t really culpable. Proverbs 5-7 are three whole chapters of warning to resist various women who tempt! Paul is also clear enough in Romans that both a Jew who knows God and a Gentile who does not are equally condemned for sin and face judgment.

Ultimately all men are neighbors, and an unsaved prostitute, for instance, is no less guilty if she entices an unsaved Gentile than if she targets a saved Christian--both are guilty of the same sin, but the prostitute is more guilty as the instigator. Thus, a Porn star whose work entices an unsaved person to view her video will still be condemned for enticing him to sin. Both will face judgment, just as some punk who talks a friend into doing a robbery and shooting a clerk would be condemned. They'd both be equally guilty for the robbery and shooting before God, but the one who drew the other into the act to start with faces additional judgment.

Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.

--1 Tim. 5:24.

This is where (among some other sinners) the poor, unknowing Adult star is going to be sorry in eternity. That person's sins will follow and actually increase after they die, and the full fruit and scope of those sins won't be known until Judgment Day when they're revealed and judged! Excluding repentance, the only hope of avoiding punishment is if the person was being Trafficked and forced, in which case the Trafficker will reap the full fruit of God's wrath. Otherwise, the person whose act enticed people to sin will face judgment. Of course, a director, cameraman, producer, distributor, financier, and so on, will have some share in judgment as well, but the performers are the main enticement and will be judged appropriately.

"What about someone in a normal movie who does a nude scene? Or who sunbathes on a nude beach or something?"

I can't comment on every grey area. But if someone made a movie about Adam and Eve, they'd be naked. If someone did a movie about David and Bathsheba, you'd likely have to film a gorgeous Black woman naked, and possibly portray a rape scene that might show some skin. But there's a difference between art and eroticism. Nudity and sex in a setting designed to arouse, rather than in a setting not intended to arouse, will always be considered sin by God.

"But if the performers really didn't know what they were doing was so wrong--"

I get the people doing this have no concept how dangerous what they're doing is. God knows that too. But ignorance of the Law doesn't save you. While some theologians do have a false teaching that if you don't know what you're doing is wrong, somehow God won't hold you accountable for it, I've showed elsewhere that He does. In fact, if that false belief *is* true, the logical conclusion to it is that Jesus would never have told the Apostles to evangelize the world. He'd have told them to keep silent because in that world view, you're only accountable if you *reject* the truth. So under that ridiculous logic, we should never preach the Gospel and then everyone will go to heaven because they'll never reject it! Ignorance is thus bliss under that theory, and the salvation rate is 100% if no one ever hears about Christ and is never told about sin, righteousness and the judgment to come!

But the truth is, all sorts of people are going to hell who never opened a Bible, along with many who did. The one thing ignorance *can* do is mitigate--lessen--punishment to a degree. But punishment still follows the guilty, and even the lightest punishment in hell is still nothing anyone would look forward to. The only positive thing to say past that is that God, unlike us,

knows how to judge righteously yet with as much mercy as the situation calls for. But hell is still hell.

So the next time you consider watching some video or looking at a magazine, be aware that you're likely going to increase the punishment of some poor woman in eternity for it.

Is it really worth it to you?

The Everyday Idolatry of the Occult.

I have a friend I went to school with. A few years ago, they accepted Christ and started changing their life, a good thing. They're still growing, but one thing I notice they've hung onto from their old life is a belief in crystals. I don't know what they really believe about them, whether they think crystals bring good luck, ward off evil, or what have you. But they still go to the Occult book store and buy crystals every so often.

I haven't felt it was my place to really get on them for something like that; I'm more concerned with them just growing at this point, and crystals are innocuous enough that if that's the worst of their problems, I'm not concerned. But things like that reveal one problem some Christians coming out of the society we live in have is playing with or hanging on to some Occult trappings, practices and items. When I say that, I'm talking more about grey areas rather than things that are flat-out Occultic to Satanic. Most people who get saved are smart enough--or should be--to completely repent of dangerous Occult items and practices. But some hang on to a few things here or there that are on the lighter side of Darkness,

The most common example I can think of is Astrology.

For most Christians, Astrology is not something they take very seriously. They might know their Sign, might check the daily horoscope on the computer (in my time it was in the newspaper), and leave it at that. That's the tobacco version of it. More serious adherents will have skilled Astrologers compile ongoing detailed charts and prognostic readings off them for life guidance that can cost small fortunes. That's the Designer Drug version.

I mention elsewhere that I was involved in the Occult in the late 60s into the 70s. Astrology was a natural part of it, but after becoming a Christian, I knew to destroy and get rid of all ties to *serious* Occult materials, practices and paraphernalia, and into the trash they went.

Good job, right?

Well--the one problem was, I kept the horoscopes. I liked Astrology, had some good things in my future foretold, and since the Wisemen were Astrologers, felt Astrology was something God has obviously used so it was okay for me to keep the horoscopes around.

I don't recall how long I did. Maybe a couple of years after committing to Christ? But finally God wanted it gone and one day the Spirit of God flat out spoke to me and *ordered* me to destroy the horoscopes!

Well...I guess God made *that* clear enough! Into the trash they went.

The truth is, there is a simple way of looking at such things: Anything Occult--that is, anything involving divining the future or communicating with spirits--should just go.

The biggest problem with all of it is that it's all idolatry with Satan the force behind it. The serious stuff--that is, things dealing with any types of "real" magic or spirits--is Satanic even if it's dressed up in a non-Satanic way. When it's used, it opens one to demonic influence from negative thoughts or feelings to oppression or even Possession. It doesn't matter that the intent may have nothing to do with Satan. The devil is behind it all. Any Occult or even technological device that seeks to communicate with "ghosts," spirits or extraterrestrials can only reach the Dark Side.

All such items seeking communication with entities is idolatrous because those who employ them want some sort of guidance or knowledge from *them* rather than from God who has given the Scriptures and the Spirit for guidance.

In the same way, those troubled by entities who resort to Occult means to deal with them--sageing the house, lighting candles and making an invocation, employing some sort of relic or non-Christian ceremony to drive them away, and so on--are using a form of idolatry to help them. This is because their faith is not in God and Christ to deal with the problem but in burning sage or using some other sort of substitute. A lot of times it will "work," but it's just a sham to deceive.

"Do I have to throw away even Cultural or decorative things if some people might think of them as religious, or if they treat them as non-Christian religious objects?"

"...An idol is nothing in the world..."

--1 Cor. 8:4.

If you have items or tattoos that to one culture might be pagan but to you are simply historic or decorative, I wouldn't sweat it. If you can just treat them as art without treating them as efficacious in some way, do what your conscience allows.

Some things, though, *can* have spirits attached to them for various reasons. If weird stuff happens when you bring home some kind of object--pray over it and trash it.

Divorce and Remarriage.

We live in a world where half the people in it are divorced. This is an important topic, and one that should be addressed. Unfortunately, the Scripture doesn't say a great deal about it, and what it does say seems very strict. I encourage anyone dealing with this question to seek counseling from their Denomination on what they believe it teaches. I can only give a general, fallible opinion on what I believe the New Testament says on the subject...

The easiest point on the subject is to presume that marriages and divorces before coming to Christ are wiped clean and put under the Blood. Not one word in Scripture addresses the subject of how to handle previous marriages for pagans, giving credence to that notion.

Now past that, Jesus is very strict on the subject:

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. (Matt 532.)

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. (Matt. 19:9.)

There isn't much wriggle room here, and there are various views on the issue, liberal and conservative. I'll give my best take on it, which you should not run with, but if you're dealing with the issue go to your own religious counselors and ultimately make your own decision.

First, let's keep in mind that in the culture and religion of the time, women were little more than property and could not initiate a divorce on their side; and marriage was a two-step process in the religion. There was an Engagement--which was technically a marriage right at that point--then a more formal ceremony down the line when the couple actually move in together (which is different from how we do it; Engagement is not counted as formally married in our culture and religion). Moses had permitted divorce if the husband '**found some uncleanness**' in his wife, but some of the rabbis had broadened this to the point of burning the husband's dinner. One of the few things the Shammaiites got right was that divorce should only be for adultery.

Now here, Jesus uses the word *Porneia*, a word typically relating to prostitution (and other illicit sexual acts), rather than *Moicheia*, which is the proper word for adultery. This causes some to teach it only refers to sex during the engagement period, not after the formal marriage, so once fully married, divorce is not allowed even in the case of actual adultery.

My take is that Jesus is using the more comprehensive *Porneia*, which *can* be inclusive of adultery, to clarify Moses' meaning, which would be to primarily say that if, during the wedding night, the groom finds the wife is not a virgin, she has "played the whore," and so he may divorce her. She may have done so while or before they were even Engaged, so *Moicheia* would be too restrictive a word to use. (One cannot commit adultery--*Moicheia*--on a man she is not even Engaged to, but she *can* commit fornication, or *Porneia*, causing her to have "**uncleanness**" from a Jewish perspective so far as marriage goes.) Past that, if she commits *Moicheia* (adultery), later in the marriage, one can reasonably presume he may again divorce her. *Porneia* thus covers all the bases for when the woman is both single *and* married but commits sexual sin and somehow "plays the whore."

"But what about the man?"

Remember, women cannot initiate a divorce in the culture. Thus, the man isn't mentioned. You can draw your own conclusion of whether or how to apply this teaching *to* a man/husband.

By the time we get to Paul, he gives permission to remarry if an unbeliever abandons the wife (1 Cor. 7:15), presumably through moving out or even divorcing her using civil law. He does not specifically give license if a *Christian* man abandons the wife, or if *she* leaves the marriage.

Now common sense would permit a spouse to separate or divorce if one is a victim of abuse or ongoing harm, but the Bible technically does not give permission to remarry for that.

“What if I’ve had a previous marriage but remarried as a Christian, maybe had kids, and somehow believed it was all right even if it was somehow technically wrong?”

I can’t give a firm answer on that. Certainly pray and seek forgiveness, and seek counseling from your church leaders on the proper thing to do from that point.

What I’ve written, however, is the best I can make from the verses the Bible provides.

“Why does my life suck so much?”

No one has a perfect life, but some people are blessed with decent lives, and are basically happy most of the way through. But some Christians--and non-Christians--may not be as fortunate, and ask that question at some point in their lives. The fundamental answer is that we live in a cursed creation because of Adam’s sin. What comes with that is sickness, disease, and demon-influenced people with fallen natures who behave badly. That affects all of us. That’s one reason life can be trying.

Beyond that, one fact most Christians do not realize is that it is possible to be specifically called to suffer in life:

Phil. 1:29. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

1 Pet. 4: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

It’s possible for a Believer to be called to some level of “suffering” in life. Joni Eareckson Tada is arguably an example. Crippled at age 17 in a diving accident, she used that unfortunate fact to form a ministry and preach, bringing a lot of good out of it. She’s certainly suffered more than you or I likely ever will.

Now did God “call” her to the cross of that kind of suffering. I’m sure she’d say yes. And she’ll have a great reward for it.

Now when it comes to you and me, for whatever degree of unhappiness, trials or persecution there may be in our own lives for however many months, years or decades of it, it could just plain be the luck of the draw in a cursed creation...judgment for sin...or it could be something God has called or allowed you or I to that we may partake of Christ’s suffering for some reason that a reward will follow in eternity if not before.

“Does that mean if you’re stuck in bad circumstances, you have to endure it helplessly because it’s obviously God’s will?”

Not at all.

1 Cor. 7: 21 **Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.**

Just as a slave, if he has an opportunity to be free, should take it, so too a person in a bad situation--if he has a legitimate way to get out of it--is not frustrating the will of God if he sees a way out of what he's going through. Use science/medicine; get a better job and advance yourself; leave your abuser, and so on.

If you are in a frustrating position that there is some way to legitimately change, go do so.

If you cannot change it, it could be something God has called you to so be as faithful as you can in that situation, and there will be a reward eventually.

Eph. 6:8 **Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.**

The bottom line is--good or bad--we're called to be faithful in life and what we face. Few of us will get an "A" at it, but we're still called to fight the good fight of faith.

If a Moslem who wishes to convert prefers using the word "Allah" to "God," can he use that word?

Yes. In fact, Arab Christians of the Middle East *do* use what we consider to be the Islamic word for God. Going back further, even the Aramaic of Jesus' time had a word for God that phonetically sounded like "Allah." That word has long been one of a number of Eastern words for the same God we worship. In our Western culture, we may use a pagan, Anglo-Saxon word originally referring to demons masquerading as gods for the One God, but in both cases the word isn't what counts; it's what meaning you attach to the word. Someone coming out of an Islamic background who feels more comfortable with the word "Allah" than "God" has no Biblical obligation to use a pagan word *we* use in substitution for a word *he* feels comfortable with. But--he must absolutely reject the Islamic definition for Allah and exchange it for the *Christian* understanding of God. The Islamic version of God has no Son. That Son did not die for our sins, did not resurrect, is not co-equal with him, and His blood does not Atonement; but Islamic atonement (Tawbah) comes through repentance, prayer and making restitution/doing good deeds.

Those are nice things to do, but the "god" who teaches that sort and level of atonement for sin will gain you eternal life is not the God of the New Testament; it's more the god of Christ-rejecting Judaism, which also can't save you apart from Christ's Blood Atonement.

So yes--the answer to the question is, it doesn't matter what name you use for the Father--or His Son, who was never called JESUS in His life. It is the understanding and meaning you put *into* the names. If a Moslem convert can embrace the Christian understanding of God and Christ, he can use whatever names for them he linguistically or culturally feels comfortable with. The key is that he cannot hang onto Islam and Christianity at the same time. He must reject one to cleave to the other.

Can someone—including a “former Christian”—who made a Pact and sold their soul to Satan repent?

Yes.

For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein.
--Old Testament and the Apostle Paul.

That is the reason.

Satan doesn't “own” anything. Even someone who “sells their soul” to him doesn't “own” their own soul and can't even *sell* it to him through some sort of Pact!

God “owns” everything. That includes the soul of sinner and saint alike.

One can yield to Satan, act like Satan, even worship Satan--but Satan can never claim ultimate ownership of him no matter what he does. Slavery, for instance, is illegal in the United States. A person can sign any agreement, accept any payment--even perform the duties of a slave and believe he is one--but he will never technically be anyone's actual property because slavery is illegal. Period! It doesn't matter what the parties do--the Constitution, which outweighs any attempts to get around it--makes it impossible to legally become the property of another person.

Satan knows that. He is so impotent can't even control anyone (short of a demon Possessing him). He can influence and/or deceive to do a snow job on someone to impel him do what he wants or to *believe* something like he now owns them, but God will always “own” the body and soul of every person ever born, whether or not they serve Him. This is how He can and will judge everyone at the Last Judgment: Everyone--saved and unsaved--is accountable to Him because this is His universe, and everything in it belongs and is subject to Him. Even Satan, who was likewise created by him and is a vastly inferior being.

Now someone ignorant of spiritual truths like this can make some sort of “Pact,” and be conned into thinking he's done something he can't repent of, but as I just said, such an action is null and void in God's eyes. Plus, as I have noted elsewhere: If there is remorse and a desire to repent--which comes from the Spirit's drawing, something Satan can't stop--God can forgive. The only sin God does not forgive is Blasphemy of the Spirit, and proof that has been committed involves two things displayed by those we see in the Gospels who committed it:

No desire for repentance.
Opposition to Christ and the Gospel.

Anyone who's committed that sin is not going to worry that they can't be saved. They simply won't care.

“But what about Judas? He ‘repented,’ and was lost!”

No he didn't. The word there indicates superficial regret, not heartfelt guilt. Judas' sin was barely worse than Peter's own denial, and if he had truly repented, returned to the apostles, fell on his face and confessed his guilt, Peter might have been the first to show mercy, mindful of his own sin.

Instead, Judas just killed himself. Peter, by contrast, filled with shame and remorse, continued on and eventually found forgiveness, just as David--who committed two unforgivable sins according to the Law--was forgiven by God.

Few people actually go do something stupid like making a Pact with the devil, but if those who do wish to repent and turn away, they should do so. The Blood of Christ has infinite power to Atone, and if you want to repent, you can always do that despite the lies the devil will throw at you.

UFOs?

My opinion is the same as I wrote in the early days of the Internet at my website: I'm sure they're "real." But they're most likely demonic manifestations, which explains their speed and maneuverability. Likewise, I believe at least some alleged Abductees who experience what they believe they do are sincere. Their experiences, though, I suspect are more along the lines of visions that seem real but take place in a spiritual reality even if some physical effects linger afterward the same way some people see and experience "ghosts" or paranormal phenomena. The other possibility is that actual living creatures *are* responsible for what's going on, but they would not be independently-evolved beings from other worlds. Rather, they trace themselves to the events of Genesis 6 and are some sort of Human-Angelic hybrids being used by Satan. As such, they are fallen beings excluded from the plan of Salvation* that are akin to soulless, intelligent animals even if some appear humanoid.

* Because Christ did not take on the nature of angels--or half-angels--to save *them* (Heb. 2:16); He took on the nature of humanity.

In any event, it is impossible for them to be legitimately benign. They can only act as agents of Satan to promote his agenda, starting with causing mankind to question or deny Scriptural truths about God and Creation.

Is there no such things as ghosts, then?

Not in the sense of them hanging around as earth-bound spirits. But there are demons masquerading as earth-bound spirits of the Departed. I get that there are many people with anecdotal stories of how their Departed parent/grandparent/friend saved their life or did something helpful or comforting, but the by-product of that is to contradict Scripture and what it teaches about death and judgment. Such experiences, even if apparently positive, ultimately make the Word of God a lie in comparison to an alleged positive encounter with a spirit. Your experience might be 100% real. It may have "helped" or "comforted" you. But if you miss the fact that there is a devil that can *Cause worldwide spiritual blindness and deception* (2 Cor. 4:4), *Create lying signs and wonders* (2 Thess. 2:8), and *falsely enlighten* (2 Cor. 11:14), your very real experience that seems positive in some ways, can actually be deception meant to deceive and destroy you and others by the time it's done.

I'll give you one example: I know a Jewish man who almost drowned but believes the ghost of his father grabbed him, helped pull him to shore, and saved his life. Sounds great,

but this experience helps reinforce his rejection of Christ and Christianity since obviously his father--according to Christian teaching he rejects--should be suffering in the Afterlife, awaiting judgment because he died, rejecting Christ as Savior. Then man's encounter really helps convince him Christian teachings are false, and no appeal by me is going to reach him because his faith in that experience--which isn't Biblical--is more convincing than the Gospel message. So if a spirit did help him, who sent it?

From my perspective, Satan sent it to deceive him and whomever he shares the story with.

If the same man told me an angel saved him, I might believe it. God could do that for some reason. That act in and of itself wouldn't be indicative that his non-Christian religion will save him. The "ghost" of a follower of that religion saving him *does* imply that, however. Thus, the first sort of encounter based on a "ghost" would not be consistent with something God would allow, while the second, based on an "angel," could be.

Point made.

Is Donald Trump the Antichrist?

No. Before we go further, I recommend the Wikipedia article on the Antichrist.

Past that--since I've been alive, the list of people I've heard some minister claim to be the Antichrist is as long as my arm: Most US Presidents, every Pope, Gorbachev, Putin, King Charles, Bill Gates, and so on.

The Reformers universally thought it was the Pope; and Catholic Popes are a common target for the speculation.

All this stupid speculation does nothing but make Christians look stupid. No one is going to know for sure whom the Antichrist is before he is "**revealed**," possibly later in his career when he enters the rebuilt Temple and proclaims himself to be God, and all other religions false.

Hitler came very close to proclaiming himself God on earth. Even so, he fell short in a number of ways in fitting the bill for the real Antichrist.

The real Antichrist will be someone a large segment of Jews (and likely Moslems) will accept as either the Messiah or some sort of prophet or Deliverer. He will be a figure with significant military and economic ability and influence. He will appear as a friend to Israel and by his support to Israel, and abilities to apparently bring peace between it and the Arab world, will deceive many into believing he is either anointed of God or--at least--is the answer to many of the world's problems.

His success at stabilizing the Middle East will anchor him in the hearts and minds of some portion of the Israelis as the man God has sent to bring a lasting peace to the land.

The question is, which Israelis will follow him? It will either be the Ultra Orthodox, who will hold authority over the faith and be running a restored Sanhedrin after the Temple is rebuilt--

who may proclaim him Messiah after he helps *get* that Temple rebuilt. Or--less likely, but it wouldn't surprise me--the Secular majority of Israel. Or possibly both for different reasons.

Though Donald Trump shows many of the traits of the Antichrist, and is accomplishing many of the kind of things the Antichrist will in his career, he can never be the Antichrist because the Antichrist must be of Jewish descent. A German Gentile like him can never be hailed as Messiah by the Ultra Orthodox.

Now while some since early times have speculated the Antichrist will be from the tribe of Dan, I believe he must be from the tribe of Judah as Jesus was. Descent from David and that tribe are necessary to be the Messiah, whomever he is.

But all this aside, it's stupid and pointless to even speculate whom the Antichrist is. Anyone wanting to know whom the Antichrist is shouldn't even look for him!

What you should look for is the one who will proceed him--the False Prophet.

Before the Antichrist appears on the scene, some sort of messianic Jewish rebbe will arise and spark some sort of revival amongst the Jews, predicting the Messiah is coming soon, this rebbe being a Schneerson-like charismatic leader who may (or may not) cut across the denominational lines of Judaism, and with possibly some level of spiritual power become hailed by Judaism, which gives heed when he gets a revelation and proclaims that "Moschiach is coming now"!

Or...

Some sort of Reformist type rabbi will arise with a secular, Social Justice-oriented version of Judaism likely embraced by the non-religious or slightly religious Jews in Israel. This man, on a platform of liberal religion, possibly mixed with some political power in the Knesset, will appeal to many secular and non-religious Jews of the nation.

In a scenario like this, a political leader with similar views--at least in a philosophical, if not religious way--arises, finds a way to appeal to the Palestinians and brokers some sort of peace deal between them, could then be hailed as the great Peacemaker of our time. The religious wave of modern Judaism sweeping the nation, coupled with this new, effective leader could possibly induce a "Jewish" religious leader to pronounce a Gentile, or even a mixed blood Jewish-Arab person or "convert" to his brand of Judaism as the Messiah.

In either case, this false counterpart to John the Baptist must first arrive to herald the way--then the *real* Antichrist will come on the scene. Those who want to know who Antichrist is must search for his forerunner, not the final manifestation.

When you find *him*, you will know Antichrist will be close behind.

It will shock some who don't know Jewish history, but we already had a preview of this with a False Prophet and Antichrist who deceived the nation, that being Rabbi Akiva and Simeon bar Kochba of 132-135 AD. Akiva, ordained by a Hillelite but also taught by a Shammaite and about as strict as one, proclaimed bar Kochba to be the Messiah,** formed an army and revolted against Rome. Rome won, and the nation went into Diaspora and slavery.

** It isn't known for certain, but some believe Akiva proclaimed Davidic descent for bar Kochva by giving him his name, which means *Son of the Star*. Coins of the time also bore his name and a star emblem.

This will happen again. A new Rabbi Akiva will arise and again proclaim some man to be Messiah. The question is whether the Ultra Orthodox will follow him, the Secular will follow him, or both follow him.

The first time, the Common people accepted Jesus and the Leaders rejected him. This time, it may reverse. It's hard to predict.

The Coming Islamic Antichrist.

While the Antichrist will be a Jew, at the same time I agree with my Moslem friends that the Antichrist will also be some sort of Moslem, known as the Al-Masih ad-Dajjal. They, like us, teach that an Antichrist is coming (though not from the Jews), and Jesus will defeat this counterfeit version of Himself,*** and in that way He will return to earth. This man will arise during a time of global upheaval and through false miracles deceive many who are desperate, ignorant or weak in their faith. Thus, it may be that when the Antichrist comes, his power base could start from Israel and the Jews but quickly spread to the Moslem world and from there to the West. He'll apparently have something positive to offer his allies for several years--reinforced by "**lying signs and wonders**" that may be technological breakthroughs offering answers to a variety of ecological, political and other problems. After a time, however, he will be unable to withstand the ecological judgment of God and his rule will begin to collapse as even his allies and subjects turn against him.

*** Some Christian eschatologists also believe the Antichrist will literally be a counterfeit Jesus Christ rather than merely a false Messiah in a general sense. I'm not in that camp but it's not impossible.

Somewhere in the midst of this he will declare himself to be God on earth, and that will cause the great rift between him and all devoted worshippers of God left on earth, Christian and otherwise. He'll be slain but will either be revived or live on through some kind of "**image**" that could be a clone, AI, or something supernatural.

How all this is going to happen I cannot say. But while I have described what I expect to happen in Israel, I do expect the spillover of his influence to reach the Moslem world as noted, which will form a much more significant power base (backed with Oil) in 10 Economic Zones he'll have ultimate control over, hence my speculation this man may be a half-Jewish/half-Arab man who somehow bridges the divide between the sons of Ishmael and the sons of Isaac and uses it as the springboard to extend his power beyond the Middle East once he consolidates his power there.

Whoever the Antichrist is, his authority, significant as it will be, will not be absolute in all places worldwide. His power will extend beyond the borders of Israel to Europe and Africa, and his seat of power could move to Europe at least for a time, but his authority will be less influential, though still significant, in other parts of the world like parts of Asia. Nations like Russia, China and India may come under his umbrella out of Economic necessity, but some or all of them will eventually rebel and come to battle him, plunging the world into chaos on top of what God will

already be doing. At some point during this, they will realize Christ Himself is on the verge of returning and all unite in a last stand against *Him*.

For this reason, despite whatever differences we have, since all three of our religions have some notion of Satan sending a false Messiah toward the End of Days, all of us--Christian, Jew or Moslem--living as people aware there is a God who judges, should proclaim together that Antichrist is coming who will deceive the ignorant, the sinners and the irreligious to their destruction.

In the meantime, while Antichrist is not Donald Trump, note how Trump is relating on friendly terms with both Israel and a number of Arab states. The Antichrist will do likewise on a greater scale, and how much more could he do that than Trump if he turned out to be the child of both Jew *and* Arab?

But before all this and the climactic battle of Armageddon, look for and find the new Rabbi Akiva and *then* you can try to figure out who Antichrist is. He'll be hot on his heels.

Trump may have his issues, but he is not the Antichrist by a longshot.

“So what does 666 mean then?”

I can't say.

Conclusion.

It's commendable to want to learn and understand the Bible. But my advice to the person who wants to be the most successful Christian he can be is this:

Love God, do what He says, and serve Him simply. If you do that, you will do well.